

**The *Great Opening of the West* development strategy and its impact on the
life and livelihood of Tibetan pastoralists:
Sedentarisation of Tibetan pastoralists in Zeku County as a result of
implementation of socioeconomic and environmental development projects
in Qinghai Province, P.R. China**

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Introduction

While travelling through the grasslands of Qinghai Province, we are greeted by signs with propaganda slogans and countless construction sites, telling us of the huge development measures implemented by the Central Government all over the West of China. Currently, this development has also reached the living space of Tibetan pastoralists. But what exactly does this development mean, beyond the creation of new roads and buildings? How exactly is it going to affect the local population in terms of changes to their daily lives? What kind of benefits will the pastoralist households enjoy and what disadvantages will they have to face? There have been efforts from the side of the Chinese government to reform and develop the west of the country already since the 1950s. The *Great Opening of the West* development strategy, however, differs from the previously implemented development campaigns. Lin and Liu define the aim of earlier development measures as the prevention of wars with neighbouring countries and the establishment of an internal relationship between China's West and East based on the exploitation of natural resources and their manufacturing, whereupon the current development strategy targets the widening socioeconomic gap between Eastern and Western China.¹ In general, we can say that the *Great Opening of the West* development strategy, launched by Jiang Zemin at the turn of the century, was designed to modernise and develop the western regions of China and also to secure inland political stability and move towards the better integration of China's minorities into the Chinese society, as represented predominantly by the Han majority. The designated aim of this development strategy is to raise the living standards of China's inhabitants in the western part of the land and narrow the income gap between the Chinese East and West. Looking at the *Great Opening of the West* from the point of view of Tibetan pastoralists, the impact of this development strategy cannot indeed be compared to any previous development measures. Since the 1950s, the state has been intervening in the lives of Tibetan pastoralists through the introduction of agricultural reforms, the establishment of people's communes or the allocation of usage rights over grassland to

¹ Lin, Liu 2011:5.

individual households. However, until the start of the 21st century, animal husbandry remained the main occupation and livelihood of Tibetan pastoralists. Even though some pastoralists accepted employment by the state, primarily in the administrative or cultural sectors, they remained linked with their close relatives who continued to live in the grasslands. Aiming to narrow the gap between China's East and West, the *Great Opening of the West* development strategy tries not only to increase the income level of rural households and their standard of living, but also to unify the way of living of the whole of China's population. Since the sedentary mode of life of the agricultural or urban population is understood to be a 'developed' way of living, the 'backward' way of life of Tibetan pastoralists should be abolished. Through implementation of various development projects involving, for example, socioeconomic or environmental motivations, the *Great Opening of the West* development strategy aims to change the living environment of Tibetan pastoralists. Their traditional livelihoods vanish and values change. The Tibetan pastoralists are faced with a huge challenge to adapt to the new urbanised and industrialised environment, and to find new occupations and sources of income. This circumstance makes the *Great Opening of the West* development strategy an extraordinary measure with regard to the society of Tibetan pastoralists. Therefore, a close analysis of the current policy agendas and their actual impact in rural areas of Western China is extremely important, as it will most probably lead to a change of the entire living and survival patterns of Tibetans pastoralists in the future. This dissertation follows the starting period of the implementation of the *Great Opening of the West* development strategy in the pastoral areas of Qinghai Province. There are of course descriptions of the general intentions of the *Great Opening of the West* development strategy in various sources, but an analysis of its impact in terms of socioeconomic changes at the individual household level is still missing. One reason for this lack is surely that the *Great Opening of the West* development strategy has been in progress only since the year 2000 and its full impact still cannot be defined. Another difficulty in performing studies of the *Great Opening of the West* programme is unquestionably its incredible magnitude: the process includes countless modernisation and development projects that cover many different subject areas such as infrastructure, economy, tourism, administration

of natural resources, ecology, culture, social welfare, social control, etc. The majority of the modernisation and development projects primarily result in profit for towns and cities in China's West, where the expansion of infrastructure and housing estates created new investment and business opportunities. The people that most benefit from these new opportunities are therefore predominantly inhabitants of the urban areas and migrants from Central and Eastern China, who are aware of these new chances and possess enough capital and knowledge to prosper from this situation.

But how does the situation appear in the countryside away from the urban centres, in places that do not enjoy favourable conditions for rapid economic development? Are the local people still able to take advantage of the extensive modernisation measures and the ensuing tremendous social changes? The main subjects of this dissertation, the Tibetan pastoralists and native inhabitants of the Amdo² area, a region that correlates more or less with the administrative unit of Qinghai Province, live far away from the urban areas and are the last social group to experience the impact of development projects centralised mainly around the cities. Nevertheless, after the first phase of infrastructure expansion was completed, projects that also affect the Tibetan rangelands and their inhabitants have been introduced. Major changes in the grasslands became visible around the year 2007, when newly created villages full of houses constructed in a uniform design started to sprout out of nothing. These new villages have been created to house Tibetan pastoralists affected by one of the development policy programmes that resulted in their sedentarisation. The particular projects that include resettlement and settlement of Tibetan pastoralists in Qinghai Province were officially launched by the Provincial and Central Government with the aim of improving the socioeconomic and environmental conditions on the High Plateau. However, the current sedentarisation measures also mean a sizeable extension of political control in the Tibetan pastoral areas. The measures enable more accurate supervision of local activities and should accelerate the integration of a hitherto pastoral society into the rest of China's population. It is also important to understand that modernisation and changes in Chinese society have also reached the

² Amdo is "one of the three major ethno-linguistic regions of Tibetan cultural geography, referring to parts of present-day Sichuan, Qinghai, and Gansu provinces." (Yeh 2003: 499).

pastoralist households and that especially the younger generation of pastoralists wants to be part of the modern world, a social factor that means an increasing trend of pastoralists relocating to cities and other urban areas to seek other occupations than animal husbandry. Nonetheless, recent Chinese policy does not wait to support this natural sedentarisation and integration process, but instead tries to accelerate it, in order to reach its development goals as soon as possible. The main question is therefore not only if the Tibetan pastoralists are going to lead a more sedentary way of life, but how this is going to happen, and what consequences will result with regard to the Tibetan pastoralists and the Chinese state. All current development projects that include the rapid sedentarisation of Tibetan pastoralists are part of the *Great Opening of the West* development strategy. The major development aims, however, concentrate on the economic benefits for the state and not primarily on the welfare of individual households or social groups such as the pastoralists. This dissertation analyses the main sedentarisation measures used by the development policy and introduced in order to enable easier implementation of socioeconomic or environmental projects. It concentrates on Tibetan pastoralists and the changes caused to their daily life and livelihood as a result of their participation on resettlement or settlement. Using available Chinese governmental documents that concern resettlement and settlement policy and examining its implementation on the ground ethnographically, this dissertation gives a detailed description and analysis of individual projects that affect the way of life of the pastoralists in Qinghai Province. Data collected through interviews with local officials and local people involved in the sedentarisation projects will offer an insight into the implementation process in reality and show the involvement of the pastoralists and attitudes towards the governmental approach. The large-scale resettlement and settlement procedure started in the Tibetan areas of Qinghai Province only seven to eight years ago and is still continuing today. Consequently, this dissertation cannot provide a report of the final impact of this policy on the society of Tibetan pastoralists. This dissertation presents a picture of the situation predominantly during the research period of 2007 to 2011 and describes the changes the particular resettlement and settlement projects have caused. Furthermore, it shows the modifications of the governmental project outlines made during the

implementation process in order to benefit either the implementing officials or the affected households, and the way in which the Tibetan pastoralists adapt to the modernisation measures and life in an urban environment. The clear analysis of recently implemented sedentarisation measures in Tibetan pastoral areas and attitudes and involvement of the affected people presented in this dissertation is an important contribution to recent research concerning changes in the lifestyle of Tibetan pastoralists in Qinghai Province under the influence of governmental development measures during the reform period of the *Great Opening of the West* development strategy, which will have a large impact not only on the further development of pastoralism in Tibetan areas, but also on the Tibetan pastoral culture as a whole.

Terminology

To describe the current development strategy in West of China, I decided to use the term *Great Opening of the West*, which is closest to the Chinese term 西部大开发 *Xibu da kaifa*. The Chinese term *kaifa* means ‘to open up’ or ‘exploit’, but can also be translated as ‘to develop’. In the western literature, we can therefore find different terms describing the development strategy such as *Open Up the West*³, *Go West* strategy or *Great Development of the West*⁴, *Great Western Development*⁵ or *Great Western Development Strategy*⁶, *Western Development*⁷, campaign to *develop the western regions*⁸, *Develop the West Campaign*⁹, *Western China Development Programme*¹⁰ or *China’s Western Development*¹¹ etc. I use the term ‘opening’ instead of ‘development’, because it seems to describe more accurately the current undertaking which opens the West of China for further access through the expansion of infrastructure and establishment of transportation links with Central and Eastern China. Only this access through ‘opening’ enables the implementation of further ‘development’ measures. The term ‘strategy’, in connection with

³ Goodman 2004, Holbig 2004, McNally 2004, Foggin 2008. Yeh 2005.

⁴ Yeh 2003.

⁵ Cooke 2003.

⁶ Mackerras 2003.

⁷ Zheng 2011, Flower 2009.

⁸ Halskov Hansen 2004, Bulag 2004.

⁹ Goldstein 2010.

¹⁰ Wang 2006.

¹¹ Bauer, Nyima 2009.

Xibu da kaifa, is also more accurate, rather than ‘campaign’, as the *Xibu da kaifa* is more just a framework for implementation of concrete programmes including numerous projects that are being modified and changed constantly during the implementation phase. In Chinese, the term *Xibu da kaifa* also appears together with the term 战略 *zhanlüe*, which means ‘strategy.’ The Tibetan expression for *Xibu da kaifa*, *Nub rgyud gsar spel chen mo*, is also closer to the term *Great Opening of the West* rather than *Development of the West*.

Regarding the sedentarisation of Tibetan pastoralists, two terms appear in this dissertation: resettlement or settlement. The term ‘sedentarisation’ is used as a generic term to describe all development measures that aim to shift the centre of the pastoralist life to an urban environment, which in Chinese are either called ‘resettlement’ (Chin: 移民 *yimin*) or ‘settlement’ (Chin: 定居 *dingju*). When compared to each other, the concrete resettlement and settlement projects have a slightly different agenda and differ in implementation. ‘Resettlement’ should be understood as a temporary measure and can mean a relocation of Tibetan pastoralists even to another province, while ‘settlement’ by contrast takes part mainly within the original county and is expected to be a long-term establishment. The different agendas and participation rules of the individual projects will be described in detail in chapter Four. The terms ‘resettlement’ and ‘settlement’ will appear in the text when describing or referring to a certain project.

Concerning the Chinese and Tibetan terminology used in this dissertation, I decided to use predominantly the Chinese terms, as the topic of modernisation and development projects is mostly referred to in Chinese. Also Amdo, including the Qinghai Province as a Tibetan ethnic area on the border of the Chinese ethnic regions, has been under the increasing influence of the Chinese language which has penetrated into the vocabulary of local people. Since the political disturbances in 2008, the usage of Chinese borrowings in daily language has decreased, yet it is still common among the Tibetan population in Qinghai to use the Chinese language for certain terms like weekdays, numbers,

certain place names and especially governmental policy terms. Some Chinese terms are at least as wide-spread as the Tibetan terms.¹² If there is no fixed English expression, in this dissertation I decided to use Chinese terms for administrative units, as many of these were created only under the Chinese administration.¹³ Some of these entities adopt the local Tibetan names of the area and render them in Chinese, while some do not. Also, the terminology of policy programmes is predominantly Chinese. Other local names and terms will be first inserted either in Tibetan or Chinese, depending on the language of common use. Tibetan and Chinese equivalents are presented in brackets and in the attached vocabulary list in Appendix 3.

The targeted group – the Tibetan pastoralists of Amdo

According to Ekvall, the pastoralists of Amdo, people who live off livestock, were nomadic as ‘what they owned, tended, and harvested was on the hoof in wide pastures that required much movement’¹⁴. Due to the implementation of various state land reforms since the 1950s, not only the agricultural patterns, but also the animal husbandry practices in Tibetan areas have changed so that Tibetans have become more sedentary¹⁵. Particularly after the introduction of people’s communes and the subsequent *Household Responsibility System* (Chin: 家庭联产承包责任制 *jiating lian chan chengbao zeren zhi*) with redistribution of land and fencing of pastureland, the Tibetan pastoralists have lost their flexibility of movement. Unable to avoid the impact of natural weather conditions through relocation to pastures offering better fodder to the livestock, these people are losing their ‘nomadic’ status.¹⁶ The development aims of the

¹² See also: Schrempf, Hayes 2010.

¹³ See: Shabad 1972: 24-56, 319-332

¹⁴ Ekvall 1968: 2.

¹⁵ Clarke 1988: 63-133.

¹⁶ There are various definitions that describe the nomadic or pastoral way of life. In his article, Gruschke presents the usual definition of nomadism that describes this way of life as follows: “Nomadisch sind Organisationsformen von Arbeit und Leben, die in Person, Arbeitsmitteln, Arbeitsplatz und Wohnungen beweglich sind, die es erlauben, geo- oder sozialklimatischen Unbilden auszuweichen.” (Gruschke 2005: 17-21).

Scholz, on the other hand, understands nomadism as a strategy to survive that differs according to the condition of a certain place in a certain time period:

“[Nomadismus ist] regionspezifische, zeitlose und ubiquitäre, optimale Strategie zur Überlebenssicherung mit eigener innerer Gesetzmäßigkeit und lokaler äusserer Erscheinungsvielfalt... Diese prinzipielle Andersheit bildet den Ausgangspunkt der sozio-ökologischen Kulturweise des Nomadismus... Sie zeichnet sich dadurch aus, dass sie nicht auf Naturbeherrschung und Naturnutzung, sondern auf das Leben in und mit der Natur ...[Die

government require more and more land to exploit natural resources and accommodate infrastructural and urban construction projects. The Tibetan rangelands are no exception and especially after the start of the *Great Opening of the West* development strategy and particularly during the 11th Five-Year-Plan of 2006-2010¹⁷, the Tibetan pastoralists have had to give way to numerous projects implemented within the modernisation and environmental policy introduced during this period and supported by large investments from the Central Government. These projects bring large changes into the lives of the pastoralists and further constrain the previous flexibility of land use. The pastoralists have to adapt to new opportunities provided by governmental regulations. With the modernisation and allotment of the grassland areas in the western part of China, the pastoralists could also take advantage of new possibilities for making a living, occupying for example one of the governmental positions in local administration, etc. The term ‘nomad’ (Tib: ‘*brog pa* = high pasture ones¹⁸) acquired an alternative meaning of affiliation to a certain social group and remained so in use even after the former activity described originally by this term was rejected. This term describes all Tibetans that live (or used to live) from animal husbandry, and particularly differentiates the pastoralists from the other part of the society who live from farming and are called *rong ba* (those from a valley)¹⁹. The meanings of these words describe the environment where these people live and the way of life they lead. In some cases, two or three generations of former pastoral families have now lived in urban areas of local towns. The parents left the grassland to work for the government as official workers or in other public positions, and their children remained in the towns to study and work as well. Nevertheless, these people kept an allegiance to the pastoral social group and differentiate themselves from the other traditionally sedentary population, still defining themselves as ‘*brog pa*, even if they have stopped being pastoralists some decades ago.

jeweils lokal spezifische Form von Nomadismus stellt so] die jeweils optimale Stufe aktiver Anpassung an die natürlichen/ökologischen und soziopolitischen Rahmenbedingungen zum Zwecke der Überlebenssicherung dar.“ (Merkle 2005: 9-10).

¹⁷ AD XXIX.

¹⁸ Ekvall 1968: 3.

¹⁹ Ekvall 1977: 49-51.

Hence the use of the term ‘pastoralist’ in an urban context in this dissertation refers rather to an affiliation to a social group.

Research area

As the framework of a dissertation is not capacious enough to include all changes caused by the *Great Opening of the West* development strategy in the Tibetan pastoral areas, I will focus predominantly on the different forms of sedentarisation as part of various development policy programmes and their impact on the society of Tibetan pastoralists. The sedentarisation measures are especially widespread in Qinghai Province, particularly because this province occupies a huge nature protection zone for China’s main river sources, the Three Rivers’ Headwaters National Nature Reserve (Chin: 三江源国家级自然保护区 *Sanjiangyuan guojia ji ziran baohu qu*) (SNNR). Consequently numerous projects with a strong environmental basis are being implemented in this area.

The resettlement and settlement sites are far too numerous to describe in full, and the discrepancies in local implementation are too significant to allow us to reach any general conclusions. For this reason, I have chosen a single case study area to represent the resettlement and settlement methods in the pastoral areas, focusing on Zeku County (Chin: 泽库县 *Zeku xian*, Tib: rTse khog), in Huangnan Prefecture. Zeku is one of the poorest pastoral counties in Qinghai Province. Almost 98 percent of the population belongs to the Tibetan minority group, and only 4 to 5 percent of the local population are involved in an occupation other than animal husbandry. It has no particular tourist or cultural sites that would motivate the government to accelerate the implementation of the modernisation and development projects introduced to the western provinces of China within the *Great Opening of the West* development strategy. As such, in comparison to large towns and provincial capitals, the changes in pastoral areas like Zeku County have occurred only slowly. The development work carried out in the county or township seats²⁰ of Zeku County was only

²⁰ According to the Chinese administration system, the administration is divided into six levels. On the first level is the Central government (Chin: 中央 *zhongyang*), followed by Provinces (Chin: 省 *sheng*) or Autonomous regions (Chin: 自治区 *zizhiqu*). On the next levels are the Prefectures (Chin: 州 *zhou*) or the Administrative areas (Chin: 地区 *diqu*), Counties (Chin: 县

minor, whereas the most evident changes brought forth by the governmental policy have been the creation of large resettlement and settlement sites. For the Tibetan pastoral population, the sedentarisation measures therefore represent the most significant changes in the context of the *Great Opening of the West* strategy that have affected both their livelihood and daily lives. In Zeku County, the resettlement and settlement sites became visible in 2007. Suddenly, a large number of new villages started to be constructed next to administrative centres or along the roads. On the one hand, these resettlement and settlement sites were presented as the best solution for remedying the relatively low living standard and low per capita income (GDP) of Tibetan pastoralists as part of socioeconomic development. On the other hand, they were presented as part of the programme to improve the environment through decreasing grassland degradation. Since the beginning of my research in 2007, additional resettlement and settlement sites have been placed into the grasslands of Zeku County yearly. According to the county government, the latest sedentarisation plans from 2009 will gradually affect all pastoralist households of the county.

Research methods

The research period spans the years 2007 to 2011. The present dissertation analyses material collected during the research period concerning sedentarisation measures implemented mainly in Zeku County as part of the *Great Opening of the West* development strategy. Available governmental documents, such as implementation plans and reports of resettlement, settlement and related projects, predominantly in Chinese, were collected at the province, prefecture and county levels. Analysis of these documents provides the background information necessary to understand the current sedentarisation measures that affect the Tibetan pastoral society. On the basis of the official policy documentation, it is possible to discover the differences and discrepancies in the local implementation process. The written official documents are supplemented by interviews with the officials responsible for implementing the strategy at the provincial and county levels, and with interviews with the affected Tibetan pastoralists from Zeku County and the

xian), Townships (Chin: 乡 xiang or 镇 zhen) and the last level is composed of Communities or Villages (Chin: 村 cun).

surrounding areas. The qualitative, semi-structured interviews with pastoralists regarding their attitudes and involvement in the individual governmental projects were collected individually in the households without the presence of governmental representatives. Participant observation of local circumstances during nearly fifteen months of research in the Tibetan pastoral areas provided additional information on the implementation of sedentarisation measures on site. The research started in 2007 and the main data collection for this dissertation ended at the end of 2009. In 2011, another short visit to the pastoral area of Qinghai Province provided a situation update regarding the implementation of sedentarisation measures in Zeku County. Since the disturbances in Tibetan areas that started in spring 2008, research in certain areas in certain periods on development issues in the Tibetan pastoral areas, especially connected to sedentarisation measures, has become difficult. Although Zeku County was not one of the main centres of the disturbances, during summer 2008 and in autumn 2009 interviews on some resettlement and settlement sites were hindered through the permanent presence of police forces and closure of certain areas. Therefore, in some cases the interviews with relocated pastoral households were conducted through my local Tibetan assistant equipped with a carefully prepared questionnaire. For security reasons, the informant's names used in this dissertation are pseudonyms.

Relationship to Existing Research

Numerous works have already described the Chinese policy of the *Great Opening of the West*. There are general introductions and descriptions of the development strategy which from the year 2000 onwards has brought the focus of the Central Government's development policy to the poorer western half of China (for example Wang Gungwu 2007, David Goodman 2004, Heike Holbig 2004 or Randall Peerenboom 2007). A well-written summary of the progress of the *Great Opening of the West* development strategy in the rural areas of China has been presented by Zheng Yisheng (2011). Other texts focus on regional development (David Goodman 1998; 2004, McNally 2004) or on certain aspects of the *Great Opening of the West* development strategy such as economy (Christopher Howe 2003), integration of minorities into the Chinese state, (Stevan Harrell 1995, Colin Mackerras 2003, Lin Yi 2007), or tourism

(Morris Rossabi 2004, Ashild Kolås 2008). Other authors deal with development and its localised impact on Tibetan areas (for example Liu Yimin 2002, Mona Schrempf and Jack Hayes 2010, Susette Cooke 2003, Barry Sautman and June Teufel Dreyer 2006, Andreas Gruschke 2003; 2005, Andrew Fischer 2007). The sedentarisation process in Western China has achieved a large scale only very recently and is now stimulating increasing interest among Chinese and western researchers (for example Michael Zukosky 2007, Du Fachun 2009), NGOs and various activist organisations (for example Human Rights Watch 2007) or journalists (for example Feng Yongfeng 2008 or Li Taige 2009). Sedentarisation in Tibetan areas as a result of the implementation of Chinese governmental rural and development policies is mentioned by Caroline Humprey and David Sneath (1999), Emily Yeh (2005) or Andreas Gruschke (2006). Melvyn Goldstein (2010) introduces the recent settlement project in the TAR and Marc Foggin (2009) or John Flower (2005) deal with the resettlement issue in Eastern Tibet at the background of the *Great Opening of the West* development strategy and its environmental project of *Turning Pastureland into Grassland Project* (Chin: 退牧还草工程 tuimu huancao gongcheng). Du Fachun (2009) offers a brief overview of the development of resettlement policies in his article about ecological migration in China. Closer research on the life of resettled Tibetan pastoralists in Qinghai Province has been conducted by Elisa Cencetti (2013). There exist works on sedentarisation of pastoralists in other parts of the world (see Fred Scholz 1982 or Joseph Ginat and Anatoly Khazanov 1998). Monisha Ahmed (2009), Ajid Chaudhuri (2005), Pascale Dollfus (2004), Sarah Goodall (2004) or Tashi Morup (2007) deal with the current socioeconomic changes and ecological damage in India that encourage the pastoralists of Leh to settle down, while sedentarisation of pastoralists in the South Himalayas due to modernisation and environmental protection efforts is discussed by Dhirendra Datt Dangwal (2009). Hermann Kreutzmann (2009) describes sedentarisation of pastoralists in the Pamir area in order to modernise their backward way of life and strengthen state political control. The former Soviet sedentarisation measures are similar to the current resettlement and settlement implementation in China. Astrid Cerny's (2010) article examines the migration of Kazak pastoralists from Xinjiang to Kazakhstan in order to escape the implementation of development policy in

China. Resettlement practices from Xinjiang where pastoralists should move, for example, into blocks of flats with centralized animal husbandry management are described in the written summary of the Regional Workshop in Khorog and Kashgar (Kreutzmann et. Coll. 2011). Transformation of life patterns and sedentarisation among pastoralists as a result of political, socioeconomical, environmental or developmental etc. changes seems to affect many pastoral communities. Nonetheless, research is still scattered and it is thus difficult to acquire a general overview across the current developments of pastoralism. A successful step into this direction has been taken by Kreutzmann (2012) in his book *Pastoral Practices in High Asia*, where he analyses the current trend in pastoral areas in Central Asia and examines the adaptation ability of pastoral communities towards the overall modernisation efforts and the changes of general frame conditions.

Concerning the sedentarisation of Tibetan pastoralists in Western China, it is common in the West to refer to this topic as ‘enforced resettlement’ without distinguishing between the different programmes and the individual project backgrounds and the involvement of the affected pastoralists themselves. Sedentarisation in Eastern Tibet as an impact of implementation of the socioeconomic and environmental policies of the *Great Opening of the West* development strategy in pastoral areas on the individual household level has not been presented in detail yet.

This dissertation describes and analyses sedentarisation measures as the most significant influence of the development strategy affecting Tibetan pastoralists. It is exceptional in taking into account not only the implementation of sedentarisation measures on site and the attitudes of the specific Tibetan pastoralists affected by them, but also the theoretical background of the development policy as presented in official governmental records. Understanding of the motives and substance of the policy programmes is essential for dealing with their implementation in practice. The combination of written plans and observation of their actual implementation allows us to compare the implementation methods and discern the influence of local officials and the participation of Tibetan pastoralists on realising the particular governmental projects. It allows an insight into how the government members in charge modify the individual projects and how the pastoralists adapt to the

new regulations in order to gain the greatest benefit. This unique insight results in this dissertation providing an important contribution to the recent research on Tibetan pastoralism. The pastoral society finds itself in a state of change under the influence of current development policy and modernisation influences. The way in which the Tibetan pastoralists are able to adapt to the current changing situation will be decisive for further development of the Tibetan society.

Structure of the dissertation

The first chapter introduces the *Great Opening of the West* development strategy, which is the framework for the recent implementation of rural development reforms. Chapter Two discusses the three main aspects of the development policy: the improvement of environmental protection, the socioeconomic situation and political control in the West of China. In the grassland areas, these aspects have led to massive sedentarisation of Tibetan pastoralists. Chapter Three introduces the Three Rivers' Headwaters National Nature Reserve situated in Qinghai Province. Due to the implementation of a strong environmental policy within the nature reserve area, Qinghai Province has thus become a location of large implementation of sedentarisation measures. Chapter Four presents the details of policy agendas and the individual projects that result in sedentarisation of Tibetan pastoralists in Qinghai Province. In chapter Five, the case study area of Zeku County is presented. Zeku County is one of the poorest purely pastoral counties in Qinghai Province. As of the present, not much research has been conducted in or on Zeku County. Since the recent historical development of this area also plays an important role for the way in which policies are adapted and implemented, I have included a brief history of the establishment of the Zeku administrative unit under the Chinese government based on the *Zeku County records* from 2005. Furthermore, this chapter describes the county and its administrative centre at the initial phase of the implementation of development reforms in the 21st century. Finally, chapter Six describes the actual implementation of resettlement and settlement measures in reality in the case study area of Zeku County. Data presented here are based on an analysis of

available official documents and interviews with involved government members and Tibetan pastoralists.

1. The Chinese path towards development. Modernisation efforts at the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century

The Chinese Communist government established in 1949 shared with the previous Republican government the aim of building up a new China which would again outperform the developed countries in the West. Since the Communist party took over the rulership of China, numerous development projects and reforms in all spheres of the economy and society have been implemented. These reforms were at first inspired mostly by the Soviet model of modernisation, such as the transformation of agriculture into the collectivised system in the 1950s²¹. Later, when the Soviet experts started to criticize China for using the wrong methods of reform implementation, the Central Government decided to develop its own method of socialist transformation. At first, this was represented by Mao Zedong, who initiated various campaigns to gain control over both people and nature, and which brought more destruction than gain to the people and state. After Mao's death, Deng Xiaoping began to look for the Chinese way of progress and started to reform the purely ideological socialism of Mao Zedong, adding the possibility of material satisfaction for the people, who then would lack a reason to criticize communist rule. The first steps towards economic development and modernisation were enacted.

In the 1980s, Deng Xiaoping instigated several Special Economic Zones²² along the eastern coast, where foreign investors could also more easily participate in the Chinese market. Together with Zhao Ziyang and Hu Yaobang, he started reforms in the industrial and agricultural sector and by 1982 also the *One Child Policy* (Chin: 计划生育 jihua shengyu) to control population growth, has been put in place²³. The national and foreign investment in the coastal regions induced a huge wave of development and the economic situation of the inhabitants rapidly improved. This process created a rich and socially satisfied middle class, important for the stability of the state. However, due to the rapid

²¹ Kirkby, Cannon 1989: 10-12, Gruschke 2012: 275.

²² Phillips, Yeh 1989: 112-135.

²³ Howe 2003: 18.

socioeconomic improvement of the eastern regions, a growing gap between the rich urban east and the poor, predominantly rural west of China appeared.

"In 1981 the largest regional income gap was that between the Shanghai Region and Shanxi Province where the ratio of the difference was 1.62:1. In 1997 the biggest gap was that between Guangdong and Gansu Provinces, where the difference was estimated to be 2.38:1."²⁴

Not only to create an economic balance in the country, but also to secure political stability, it was necessary to fill the social gap and to improve local economy and the living standard of the inhabitants in the West of China. Acceleration of development in Central and Western China after a certain level of development had been reached in the eastern coastal areas was therefore the second part of Deng Xiaoping's *Two Overall Strategies* (Chin: 两个大局 liang ge da ju), designed in the 1980s to develop the country.²⁵ The second development stage that should concern the greater part of Central and Western China became known as the current *Great Opening of the West* development strategy.

1.1. The *Great Opening of the West* development strategy

Jiang Zemin, who became the head of China in 1993, saw himself as Deng's successor in promoting the economic development of the country. The difference between these two leaders was that Jiang Zemin did not regard the possible political reform that would normally follow the economic reform as necessary²⁶. At the beginning of March 1999 Jiang Zemin first accentuated the necessity of a policy to speed up the development in Central and Western China.

²⁴ Howe 2003: 25.

²⁵ Lin, Liu 2011: 1-2.

²⁶ Heath 2005: 159 or Howe 2003: 14.

“If the west of China is not stable, then the whole country cannot be stable, if the living standard in the west of China is not good, then the living standard in the whole country is not good and if there is no modernization in the west of China, then there is no modernization in the whole country.”²⁷

“The Western area is so large and takes over the half of the whole of state’s territory. But the majority is in a state of underdevelopment or wilderness. The West [of China] must sooner or later be developed. Otherwise, how could we reach a modernisation of the whole country? How could China became a strong economic state? If the USA did not develop the West earlier, could it achieve today’s stage of development?”²⁸

On various occasions during 1999, the future main targets of the development strategy were accentuated by Jiang Zemin and Zhu Rongji: Improvement of the socioeconomic situation, political stability, industrial benefits for the rest of the country and environmental conservation.

“It is necessary to progressively reduce the development differences among various regions of whole China. Harmonised social and economical development must be achieved as well as unity and wellbeing of the whole population...”²⁹

“The minorities are quite concentrated in the West [of China] and it is also a border area. Fastening development of the West would preserve political and social stability. Therefore promotion of national unity and safeguarding of border security is of a great significance.”³⁰

“The areas in the East [of China] should take seriously the development in the West [of China], it is a mutually beneficial, complement and unite

²⁷ AD XXIV: 78.

²⁸ Yan 2001: 1.

²⁹ Jiang Zemin’s statement from the 9.6.1999 (Yan 2001: 1).

³⁰ Jiang Zemin’s statement from the 17.6.1999 (Yan 2001: 2).

development principle. Production should be developed through shift of industry, transfer of technology and cooperation. Economical and technological cooperation between [East and West of China] should be strengthened.”³¹

“The erosion on Yellow Earth High Plateau must be put in order, ecological and environmental construction must be strengthened in order to put in order the Yellow River and let it benefit the Chinese people. The green vegetation on the Yellow Earth High Plateau is diminishing and the erosion is growing, the ecological situation is severe. If this situation does not change, it would endanger the existence and development of the whole Chinese nation and leave legacy of trouble for future generations.”³²

The content of such statements became reality during the huge undertaking prepared to develop the majority of the country, which became known and is currently being implemented under the title *Great Opening of the West* (Chin: 西部大开发 xibu da kaifa). Jiang Zemin chose to add the term ‘Great’ (Chin: 大 da) into the title to emphasize that this development will not be on a small scale³³. This development strategy indeed deserves this title as it includes a huge amount of programmes and projects implemented on all levels from the supra-regional to the household levels, and concerning all different spheres such as economics, infrastructure, environment, social structures, education, inland political control, etc.

Soon after the first announcements, specific administrative structures were created to formulate and implement the guidelines for such a gigantic project, and further preparations for the implementation of the development policy were made. Finally, with the main aims and ideas defined to reach a state of ‘flourishing economy, social progress, settled life, unified nationalities and

³¹ Jiang Zemin’s statement from the 25.6.1999 (Yan 2001: 2).

³² Statement of prime minister Zhu Rongji from August 1999 (Yan 2001: 2).

³³ Lin, Liu 2011: 2-3.

graceful landscape in the West of China'³⁴, the *Great Opening of the West* was officially launched in June 1999.

1.1.1. The dimensions of the *Great Opening of the West* development strategy

The implementation work began immediately in the following year of 2000. The main goals of the development strategy include promotion of significant economic development in Western China, improvement of living standards of urban and rural residents in Western China with acclimatisation to the national average, narrowing of the gap between Eastern and Western China and creation of a well-off society in Western China.³⁵ These goals should be reached through speeding up construction work, strengthening environmental protection and establishment of ecological constructions (Chin: 生态建设 shengtai jianshe), consolidation of the agricultural status, restructuring of industry, development of tourism and establishment of science and technology education and cultural and health facilities.³⁶

These development measures implemented in Western China were expected as well to influence the rest of the country. So, for example, the enormous development of industry connected to the exploitation of natural resources that are the property of the state does not usually benefit the local population, which cannot participate in the industrialisation movement, but it benefits the East of China, where most of the natural resources are transported, further processed and used in manufacturing.³⁷ Narrowing the social and income gap between China's East and West and establishment of a well-off society in Western China, which includes also large number of China's minorities, should strengthen the national stability.

"The economic motives for Western Development [*Great Opening of the West*] are to provide physical resources to sustain and develop China's manufacturing centres, largely in eastern China, and to enable agriculture

³⁴ AD XXIV: 79.

³⁵ Lin, Liu 2011: 3-5.

³⁶ AD VI: 1;2.

³⁷ Lin, Liu 2011: 40-41.

to feed the ever-increasing population... The economic aim is also to develop the West for the sake of its people. Primary mineral extraction will come first, then intermediate processing (to capture more of the 'value added' and to create more employment) and, finally, local manufacturing with new towns and cities... Prosperous Tibetans and Uyghurs will then, it is hoped, gracefully accept their place in a united China, abandon their religions and truly embrace atheism, the Communist Party and democratic centralism. Ethnic and national unity will then be assured. 'Splittism' and the threads of instability will recede into the past. Also, the success of the Communist Party in enriching the whole country will ensure its election if democracy is introduced in the distant future."³⁸

The first Chinese governmental documents concerning the agenda of the *Great Opening of the West* present more or less only a general overview of the development strategy which Goodman summarises as nation-building aims to encourage endogenous economic growth, reduce socioeconomic inequalities and ensure social and political stability in non-Han areas of the PRC.³⁹ The actual dimensions of the implementation of the development policy and concrete projects were not exactly specified. New development projects concerning all spheres such as infrastructure, environment, local economics, land management, etc. on the national, provincial or local levels are being designed, added and launched concurrently, according to the present and local needs and financial feasibility. It is possible to say that so far all state funded projects, whether directly or indirectly, through the provincial level budget introduced to Western China since the year 2000 have been implemented in the name of the *Great Opening of the West*. Heike Holbig summarizes the development strategy as follows:

“...the Open Up the West policy is best described as “soft” – an amorphous set of diverse policy agendas and instruments not designed to form a complete and coherent programme, but rather to appeal to as many

³⁸ Heath 2005: 216-217.

³⁹ Goodman 2004: 317.

interests as possible simultaneously. As a consequence of this “soft” nature, policy implementation is found to depend to a great extent on the specific interpretations and arrangements of the provincial jurisdictions involved.”⁴⁰

From the geographical point of view, the size of ‘Western China’ of the *Great Opening of the West* development strategy has also changed since the first announcement. In 1999 the state defined ten provincial-level jurisdictions to benefit from the development: TAR, Qinghai, Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, Gansu, Shaanxi, Sichuan, Guizhou, Yunnan and Chongqing, which cover 56 percent of the whole of China’s territory and encompass 23 percent of China’s population⁴¹. The documents issued in 2000 include also the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region and Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region⁴² (see figure 1).



Figure 1: The geographical dimension of the implementation of the Great Opening of the West development strategy.

⁴⁰ Holbig 2004: 335-336.

⁴¹ Heath 2005: 193.

⁴² AD VII.

Finally, in 2001, the Xiangxi, Tujia and Miao Autonomous Prefectures in Hunan Province, the Enshi, Tujia and Miao Autonomous Prefecture in Hubei province and the Yanbian and Korean Autonomous Prefecture in Jilin Province were also included. This figure amounts to 71 percent of China's total area and includes about 29 percent of China's population⁴³, and the majority of China's minority regions and population⁴⁴. The selected regions could be defined as characterized by economic underdevelopment, lack of economic infrastructure and large numbers of ethnic minorities⁴⁵. Holbig summarizes the regional qualification for participation in the development strategy through two major points: First, the national ecological interests that qualified the south-west regions for their erosion of soils and devastating floods originating there and the north-west regions for their shortage of water leading to rapid desertification; and second, political aspects related to minority areas.⁴⁶

1.1.2. The schedule of the *Great Opening of the West* development strategy

In January 2000, the *Great Opening of the West* leadership groups were established in each province to deal with the implementation of the development policy.⁴⁷ The duration of the *Great Opening of the West* was scheduled for 50 years. The entire development process has been divided into three phases. The first phase scheduled for 2001-2010 focused mainly on the development of infrastructure, but also on GDP growth, adequate health care supply, an accessible schooling system and the enlargement of the radio and TV broadcast system in the countryside. The second phase scheduled for 2010-2030 is intended to further accelerate the economical and cultural development, and during the final phase the living standards of China's West should meet the standards of China's East.⁴⁸

According to the Five-Year planning method of the Chinese government, so far the 10th and the 11th Five-Year Plan contained plans to develop China's West. Within the 10th Five-Year Plan during the period from 2001 to 2005, the

⁴³ Lin, Liu 2011: 4.

⁴⁴ Jing 2001: 1.

⁴⁵ Goodman 2004 (I): 320.

⁴⁶ Holbig 2004: 352.

⁴⁷ AD XXIV: 81.

⁴⁸ Paul, Cheng 2011: 170-171.

government claims that the annual average production value in China's West increased by 10.6 percent and local annual income increased by 15.7 percent. A further 70 construction projects have been started with a total investment of 1,000 billion RMB. 220,000 km of roads, 5,000 km of railroads and 10 airports have been constructed and water and electricity network have been enlarged. The *Turning Farmland into Forest Project* (Chin: 退耕还林工程 tuigeng huanlin gongcheng) has been implemented on 5,260,000 hectares, afforestation of desolated hills and soils have been carried out on 7,650,000 hectares, *Turning Pastureland into Grassland Project* has been implemented on 19,330,000 hectares and 1,200,000 poor people have been relocated. Electricity, broadcasting, drinking water and other facilities have been brought to counties and townships.⁴⁹ The 11th Five-Year Plan for the period 2006-2010 presents further development measures to be carried out in the *Great Opening of the West* implementation area. It concerns strong promotion of construction the 'new socialist countryside', the further construction of fundamental facilities, development of special industries, ensuring of development of important urban areas, promoting ecological protection and constructions and environmental protection and natural medicines, improvement of basic public services, promotion of constructions to strengthen people's abilities, positive extension of inner and outer communications and exchange and further strengthening and improvement of the *Great Opening of the West* mechanism.⁵⁰

1.1.2.1. Expansion of infrastructure

During the infrastructural development period, a suitable road and transportation network had to be built. Existing urban areas have been rebuilt and enlarged and all administrative centres were connected via roads. In addition to the construction of communal roads and highways, the 10th Five-Year Plan of 2001-2005 included as well the extension of the railway network. The most important extensions were the rail link from Urumqi to Kashgar completed in 2001 and the new line from Golmud to Lhasa finished in 2006. The construction of additional airports to create a consistent airline network⁵¹

⁴⁹ AD XXIX: Article 1.

⁵⁰ AD XXIX.

⁵¹ Branigan 2010.

and investigation into the abundance of natural resources in the West of China, as well as West-East gas and electricity transmission and environmental constructions⁵² were also part of the first development phase.⁵³ These plans required, of course, enormous investments from the Central Government. According to a report of the *Qinghai Great Opening of the West* leadership group from 2005, governmental investment of 700 billion RMB was designated to build 350,000 km of roads in Western China between 2000 and 2010. For the construction of around 18,000 km of railways in Western China, another 100 billion RMB were spent in the first five years alone.⁵⁴ The 11th Five-Year Plan includes further expansion of road and railroad, airport and river road network such as the connection Xining-Golmud, the airport in Xining or Yushu and river traffic on the Yangtze River.⁵⁵

1.1.2.2. Industrialisation and urbanisation

For the 11th Five Year Plan, the Central Government further stressed its focus on narrowing the still rapidly widening wealth gap between China's East and West. The main goals for this period were speeding up the industrialisation and urbanisation, further enlargement of infrastructure, environmental protection, development of unique and advantageous industries and establishment of social infrastructure with a focus on equalising access to basic public services. The main targeted industry sector that should be developed in Western China is heavy industry. Other basic industries in this area are energy and resources, heavy chemicals, national defence, value-added agricultural products and high-tech industry. Urbanisation, which should accompany the process of industrialisation, should concern especially selected important zones with economic potential, for example around the upper Yangtze River. However, for minority regions such as Tibet or Xinjiang, a special urbanisation policy has also been followed⁵⁶. The 11th Five-Year Plan further concentrates on the creation of a 'new socialist countryside' with developed production, comfortable living, civilized environment, clean and tidy villages and with

⁵² Lin, Liu 2011: 6.

⁵³ See also: Lustgarten 2008.

⁵⁴ AD XXIV: 82.

⁵⁵ AD XXIX: special column 3.

⁵⁶ Lin, Liu 2011: 6-27.

democratic management. Ten projects were defined to enable improvement of the rural areas. These include, for example, reform of the *Turning Farmland into Forest* policy, in order that in the southwestern areas there must remain at least 0.5 *mu*⁵⁷ and in the northwestern areas at least 2 *mu* of arable field per person to secure sufficient grain rations and also further construction of facilities in villages and relocation (*Ecological Resettlement Project* Chin: 生态移民工程 *shengtai yimin gongcheng*) of rural households in farming and pastoral areas as well as the settlement of pastoralists.⁵⁸

1.1.2.3. Land, environment and natural resources

The book *Zhongguo xibu kaifa shihua* mentions environmental protection and ecological constructions as the essence of the *Great Opening of the West* development strategy.⁵⁹ These measures include implementation of the *Turning Farmland into Forest or Grassland Project* that should be carried out predominantly within the affluent areas of Yangtze and Yellow River, the *Turning Pastureland into Grassland Project* that should be implemented predominantly in the pastoral areas and degraded grassland areas of Inner Mongolia, Gansu, Ningxia, Qinghai and Xinjiang, *Ecological Resettlement Project* that should be carried out in areas that suffer from desertification and wind-blown sand and in the Three Rivers' Headwaters protection area and further enclosures of land and restoration of vegetation.⁶⁰ The policy concerning land and natural resources includes extensive restoration of grass vegetation and afforestation of cultivated land, especially on mountain slopes, which also enables economic organisations and individuals to apply for land use rights. The use rights for state-owned land can be sold and obtained, if the conditions of afforestation work remain fulfilled and the implementation of ecological constructions (see chapter Five) continues. The use rights for state-owned land should be issued for 50 years, with the possibility of an extension. The state can claim the use rights over the state-owned land back in case of need, but it must provide compensation. Investigation, evaluation and exploration of natural resources should take place, as well as protection and

⁵⁷ 1 *mu* = 0,0667 ha.

⁵⁸ AD XXIX: special column 2.

⁵⁹ Wen 2001: 1.

⁶⁰ AD XXIX: article 7.

reasonable use of them. Prospecting for minerals should be accelerated and mining rights sold and transferred according to the law, so that a cultivated market with mining industry rights could be established.⁶¹

1.1.2.4. Political stability

From the point of view of political stability, it is desirable to create a state where everyone lives according to same social rules and same social standards. Unification of the entire country and integration of all of its inhabitants into the majority of Han-Chinese society has been one of the aims of the Chinese government since it came to power in 1949. After the demonstrations in Tibet in 1993, a statement was made about integrating the nation of Tibetans into the Chinese society:

"...an all-out effort must be made to eradicate Tibetan Buddhism and culture from the face of the earth so that no memory of them will be left in the minds of coming generations - except as museum pieces... We must teach and guide Tibetan Buddhism to reform itself. All those religious laws and rituals must be reformed in order to fit in the needs of development and stability in Tibet, and they should be reformed so that they become appropriate to a society under socialism."⁶²

Nation-building efforts based on standardisation and homogenisation⁶³ are also part of the *Great Opening of the West* development strategy. The minority population should acquire better chances for economic development, which would help to establish social harmony, political stability and national security.⁶⁴

The huge construction undertakings of the *Great Opening of the West* development strategy also require a large number of professionals and workers to complete the works. The predominantly rural area of China's West lacks

⁶¹ AD VI: 3;3.

⁶² Statement made by Chen Kuiyuan, Communist Party Secretary in Tibet (1992-2000). (Heath 2005: 151).

⁶³ Goodman 2004 (I): 325.

⁶⁴ Holbig 2004: 352.

trained personnel to take on these tasks. As a consequence of the project planning, an enormous immigration wave of mainly Han and Hui (Chinese Muslim) workers and professionals from Central and Eastern China flowed into the Western areas. Besides attaining the designated goals of the development projects, this immigration had an additional effect supported by the Central Government. Increasing the number of Han people in the areas where the majority of inhabitants belong to a minority group encourages social integration and erases the cultural differences that are significant for differentiating among the 56 nationalities of China. This situation might as well be a part of the globalisation process, as an intention of the Central Government to prevent acts of local nationalism based on cultural distinction and to reach inner state stability.

After the disturbances in Tibetan areas in 2008, the Chinese government further accelerated the development work in Tibetan areas to ensure that the current policy of the *Great Opening of the West* development strategy finally completes the goal of integration of minorities and eases political control over border areas in the West of the country.

1.2. ‘Great Opening of the West means Great Development for Qinghai’



Figure 2: The welcoming signs along the runway at Xining airport, March 2007

‘Great Opening of the West means Great Development for Qinghai’ is the meaning of the huge Chinese characters 西部大开发青海大发展 (xibu da kaifa Qinghai da fazhan) (see figure 2) lining the runway of Xining airport. It is the first thing a visitor travelling by plane can see from Qinghai even before touching the ground.

In 1999, most of Qinghai Province was classified as a ‘poverty-stricken’ region at the national or provincial level. Therefore, the introduction of the *Great*

Opening of the West development strategy has been welcomed by the provincial leadership, which hoped to use it to solve central economic problems such as investments into an area marked by large labour camps, limited industrial base and infrastructure as well as environmental damage. The *Great Opening of the West* in Qinghai Province should enable the implementation of a more gradual development approach targeting three major issues: environmental sustainability, improvement of the province's internal infrastructure and establishment of better communication links with the rest of the PRC.⁶⁵

The environmental part of development should focus on repairing environmental damage caused during previous decades that concentrated on industrial progress, without regarding the impact on nature. New environmental protection areas, like the Three Rivers' Headwaters National Nature Reserve area or the Lake Qinghai Environmental Protection area, were established. Large-scale projects of farmland retirement, pastoral restoration and afforestation started to be implemented.⁶⁶ The greening of Qinghai received financial support from the Central Government as one of the infrastructural projects. The development of internal infrastructure further included extension of the road network and also improvement of education, as the Qinghai Province lagged far behind the national average in rates of primary school participation and childhood and adult literacy.⁶⁷

To encourage local economic growth and secure investment supplies independent of the state budget, the Provincial Government encouraged enterprises and private investors to participate in local development through investment into infrastructure, communications, energy supply, mineral extraction, health, education, livestock production, traditional medicines, tourism, etc. In return for investment engagement, the government offers for example favourable tax conditions and other benefits.⁶⁸ The investors are

⁶⁵ Goodman 2004 (II): 379-389.

⁶⁶ "In 2000 and 2001, 500,000 *mu* of farmland was returned to forest and grassland in experimental 16 counties. From 2002 it is planned to plant 2.27 million *mu* to trees and grass in the Qaidam Basin (where desertification has been most severe) and to retire further 1.8 million *mu* of farmland to forest and grassland." (Goodman 2004 (II): 391).

⁶⁷ Goodman 2004 (II): 392-393.

⁶⁸ AD XX.

predominantly interested in urban areas and not much of these private funds flow to the rural majority of Qinghai.

The sector most visible for an ordinary visitor is the tourism sector, which concerns also the Tibetan cultural areas, and the expansion of real estate. At the beginning of the 1990s, tourism was already identified by Chinese policy-makers as a key to economic development in minority areas.⁶⁹ In Qinghai, it also makes up an important component of the growing GDP. It is for this reason that places possessing scenic spots or cultural relics were the first to get a taste of development and to obtain governmental investment for large modernisation projects to create tourist attractions.

1.2.1. Development in urban areas

The first example of the successful implementation of the development policy on the way to Qinghai Province is the impressive huge modern building of Xining airport finished in 2006, which rises right next to a small and otherwise unnoticeable house that once contained the earlier arrival and departure hall (see figure 3).

Xining, the capital of Qinghai Province, is experiencing an extreme economic boom. It increases in size every year and modern buildings are quickly replacing the old gray ones. The city itself is not particularly spectacular and cannot offer many interesting tourist spots. To compensate for this, the government invented a new image for the capital of Qinghai Province and started a huge campaign with Xining propaganda as the ‘summer capital’. Because of its mild climate, this place offers refreshment during the hot summer to people from Beijing and the south of China, which should encourage not only tourists to visit Qinghai during the hot summer months, but also private investors to purchase a summer residence here. Numerous residential areas with multi-storey buildings were constructed in Xining (see figure 4) and are sold under this slogan to Chinese from the eastern and southern provinces.

⁶⁹ Kolås 2008: 1.



Figure 3: The old and new buildings of Xining airport, March 2007

During the last two years, an increasing number of former pastoralists working in government jobs in township or county administrative centres also aim to buy an apartment in the provincial or at least prefectural capital. In the majority of cases, they need to obtain mortgages to pay the high real estate prices. However, they do not move into the city, but use the apartments mostly as a status symbol and live in them on their rare journeys to the capital. Increasingly, such apartments are also used by the children from pastoral households who study in town. The gigantic development of the city of Xining, however, brought not only new paved streets and modern high buildings, but the enlargement of the urban area also requires extension of facilities such as heating, which together with the increased number of cars on the streets causes severe pollution, predominantly during autumn and winter.



Figure 4: Constructions of new apartments, Xining, September 2009

In addition to urban development, to attract more visitors after the year 2000, Qinghai Province started to organize many different exhibitions and events with various topics like photography, poetry, carpets or cheese. Another attraction is the international bicycle race *Tour of Qinghai Lake*, first held in 2001, which is intended to help draw attention to Qinghai in the rest of China and abroad. Xining city is now well known not only as a gate to remote Qinghai, but also to the whole Tibetan plateau including the TAR, which can now be easily and comfortably reached by plane or the new railway line Beijing-Xining-Lhasa. The tourism campaign to promote Qinghai in the travel agencies throughout China was successful, and every summer the countless hotels in Xining are booked fully by Chinese tourists who want to see the untouched nature of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau and enjoy a warm welcome from Qinghai's minorities in the grassland or in special tourist sites, where they can promote a little bit of their culture and traditions.

But how do the local inhabitants of Qinghai actually profit from the huge economic boom centralised mainly in urban areas? How does the *Great Opening of the West* development strategy manifest itself in rural areas,

predominantly in the Tibetan pastoral regions? And in what ways does this development strategy directly affect the daily life of Tibetan pastoralists?

1.2.2. Development efforts in pastoral areas

In the old societies of certain of the minorities that inhabit China's West, different values were created because of the different cultures and lifestyles caused by local environmental conditions. This lifestyle often does not correspond with the aims of modern Chinese society and resulted in an increased impression of backwardness in the minority areas.⁷⁰ In the case of pastoralism, ancient Chinese culture of the imperial era already considered this method of livelihood to be backward and undeveloped in comparison to the farming society.⁷¹ Nowadays, the current Chinese propaganda labels the Tibetan countryside as backward and uses this to legitimise the claim of necessity to modernise the region in order to reach the standard of the 'developed' Chinese society in the East of the country⁷².

After the introduction of the *Great Opening of the West* development strategy even in Tibetan pastoral areas, in many cases socioeconomic improvement on the household level has become noticeable. This is not only visible from the view of the countable GDP, which statistically proves better material conditions of the households in Western China. Changes are also visible in reality. The households have access to more cash income, which enables them to enjoy the material goods brought into almost every remote corner of the country. In order to enable a 'developed' way of living, the government offers new houses with road access and state subsidies to poor households. The modernisation and implementation of development projects, however, also significantly alter the traditional way of life in rural Tibetan areas.

The implementation of projects with environmental protection aim on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau and also the large expansion of infrastructure cause significant changes to the living environment of Tibetan pastoralists. In order to enable the implementation of development measures, an increasing number

⁷⁰ See also: Cannon 1989: 164-179.

⁷¹ See for example: Seitz 2006: 63-68 or Lovell 2007.

⁷² Lin 2007: 933-948.

of Tibetan pastoralists are pushed to start a sedentary life in an urban environment. Promotion of environmental protection and restoration of the ecosystem leads to the reduction of herding areas and livestock herds. The Tibetan pastoralists are losing their production and income base, which allowed them to be self-sufficient in terms of food and fuel.

In particular, the young generation among the Tibetan pastoralists appreciates the access to modern products and the shift towards urban residence. However, it is necessary to enable the Tibetan pastoralists to create as well a long-term sustainable income base in the new ‘developed’ environment⁷³, in order to be able to develop their culture and society further. Otherwise they would become a marginalised group, which would probably have also a negative influence on the nation-building, state development and political stability development efforts scheduled in the agendas of the *Great Opening of the West*.

The development of tourism also partly concerns the Tibetan pastoral areas. Numerous visitors are enticed to explore the exotic features of China’s ethnic minorities and their culture and demand to see the authentic and hence ‘undeveloped’ native Tibetans. In order to present the Tibetan cultural sites to the tourists, the government initiated large reconstruction projects of selected Tibetan monasteries in Qinghai Province and created scenic parks that present the unique nature of traditional minority performances. This factor might be an opportunity for the minorities to preserve and present their ethnic identity and culture, but only as long as it serves the economic aims of the government. However, in some cases the authenticity sought by tourists might be in inherent contradiction to the modernity sought by some local Tibetans⁷⁴ and also to the state agenda to develop the West of China and remove and modernise the ‘backward’ way of life of the minorities. Moreover, the local people themselves do not earn much from the tourism boom to the Tibetan areas. The majority of the profit goes directly to Chinese entrepreneurs or the government.

Places similar to my case study area, i.e. Zeku County, without spectacular landscapes or cultural sites to attract tourists, are certainly in second place on

⁷³ Kreutzmann 2009: 103-109.

⁷⁴ Kolås 2008: 126.

the development list of the government. Governmental investment in such areas is limited, and the promised modernisation and development has come only slowly. In Zeku, the county seat retained its highly functional style, without displaying any single instance of Tibetan architecture. No effort to establish a tourist base here could be noticed. In 2011, this place still did not offer any suitable tourist accommodations or a visitor information office. The only places mentioned in governmental reports as possible tourist attractions are the Maixiu forest on the border with Tongren County (Chin: 同仁县 Tongren xian, Tib: Reb gong) and the remote Hor (Chin: 和日 Heri) monastery with its stone-carving tradition. The county government report from 2007 also mentions the possibility of ethnic tourism, showing the pastoralist traditions in this area⁷⁵, but no measures have been taken to realise this idea. The majority of local inhabitants engaged in animal husbandry continued their life on the grassland as before, at least until 2007, when finally significant changes concerning even the pastoralists were introduced in rTse khog through various policies included into the *Great Opening of the West* development strategy. The development strategy aims to modernise the traditional animal husbandry and engage some of the pastoralists in different occupation sectors such as manual labour, or business and services. The pastoralists are usually not informed about the extent of the *Great Opening of the West* development strategy and the backgrounds of the associated policies. They merely notice the changes to their lives caused predominantly through ecological construction and sedentarisation efforts, which are the most visible and more concrete development measures affecting the local people in Tibetan pastoral areas.

⁷⁵ AD XXXII: 5.

2. The main policy aspects of the *Great Opening of the West* development strategy that directly influence the livelihoods of Tibetan pastoralists

The most genuinely visible aspect of the *Great Opening of the West* development strategy in Tibetan pastoral areas of Qinghai Province and the most significant intervention into the pastoralists' livelihood has been the introduction of large-scale resettlements and settlements. As the measure of the *Great Opening of the West* development strategy that affects the Tibetan pastoralists most significantly, sedentarisation is officially an effect of creating improvements in the socioeconomic or environmental situation. However, consolidation of political control in rangeland areas of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau inhabited mainly by Tibetan pastoralists is doubtlessly also an important reason for widening of the sedentarisation procedure.

2.1. Socioeconomic improvement and political control

As mentioned above, the *Great Opening of the West* development strategy aimed to create an improvement of the economic and socioeconomic situation in the western parts of China, in order to reduce the huge income imbalance between the urban coastal regions and the rural west. Achievement of better living standards at the household level through increased income and an integration of the marginalised minority population in China's West also has a positive influence on state stability. The government has been providing various investments and subsidies to remote areas since the 1950s. In my case study area of Zeku County, during the reform period from 1954 to 1956 the state subsidized the poorest local Tibetan households with several hundreds of thousands of RMB to buy their own livestock. Up until 1978, the state continued to release grain to be given to the poorest pastoralists⁷⁶. During the reform period, the government further aimed to increase production rates in every field of industry, agriculture and also animal husbandry. The growth of livestock herds by the reduction of livestock mortality through veterinary aid⁷⁷ was also encouraged. Later, during the 1990s, to accelerate the improvement of

⁷⁶ Li 2005.

⁷⁷ *Mtsho sngon bod yig gsar* 'gyur. 05.10.1994.

the socioeconomic welfare of the pastoral households, the government further promoted the increase of livestock numbers.⁷⁸ To improve the living comfort of pastoral households, measures such as the *Project to Increase Living Comfort* (Chin: 温饱工程 wenbao gongcheng) launched in 1978, and the *Set of Four* (Chin: 四配套 sipeitao) project launched during the 1990s, were introduced and supported through financial or material aid. This aid included the large scale construction of solid houses in winter pastures after the reallocation of land among individual households following decollectivisation. The *Set of Four* project was initiated in the southern part of Qinghai in 1991.⁷⁹ The primarily pastoralist southern part of Qinghai includes Yushu and Guoluo Prefectures and parts of Hainan (Xinghai, Chin: 兴海 Xinghai, Tib: rTsi gor thang and Tongde Chin: 同德 Tongde, Tib: Gad pa sum mdo) and Huangnan (Zeku, Henan) Prefectures and Tangula Township of Haixi Prefecture⁸⁰. The focus of this project was the improvement of living conditions for the inhabitants of rural areas. In the grassland area, the four scheduled improvements included governmental support to raise fences⁸¹, sow grass, construct solid houses and animal sheds at the winter pasture of each household.⁸² Previously, the majority of the pastoralists used to live in tents all year round. Since the adoption of the *Great Opening of the West* development strategy, the governmental investments into rural western areas and subsidies at a household level have increased enormously. The government extended projects for poverty alleviation targeted at the poorest households in the community, such as the *Five Welfare Guarantees* (Chin: 五保户 wu baohu) and introduced further measures that pushed forward the sedentarisation of Tibetan pastoralists, such as the *Ecological Resettlement Project* which relocates households from areas with strong grassland degradation to new

⁷⁸ Luosan, Lingzhi 1996: 156-158.

⁷⁹ AD XVI: 70.

⁸⁰ AD XVI: 70.

⁸¹ In 1995 the largest fenced areas in Zeku County were in Duokamao and Xibusha Townships. Total length of fencing raised in 1995 in Zeku County was 184,800 m; (in the whole of Qinghai Province 6,260,300 m) with total investment of 1,891,400 RMB of which 811,400 RMB was paid by the pastoralists and the rest by the provincial government. (AD XVII: 114-119). The most grass planted was in Ningxiu (475.8 ha) and Duofudun (413.1 ha) Townships. (Li 2005: 111-113).

⁸² AD XVIII: 25-30.

For examples of implementation of the *Set of Four* project in Golok, see Horlemann 2002: 241-270.

resettlements. The implementation of *Ecological Resettlement Project* was the governmental solution for the problem of the worsening environment causing a rapid decrease of the pastoralists' living standards. According to the Nationalities Cultural Committee of Qinghai Province in 2007, only about 58 percent of the grassland in the Sanjiangyuan region (see chapter Three) could still be used for herding due to grassland degradation. The capacity of the grassland to carry animals declines every year. As a result, about 20 percent of pastoral households in the Sanjiangyuan area have reverted to being households with no or few livestock. By 2007, 4,965 households (24,000 people) had already been resettled in Qinghai Province. After the project is completed, a total of 10,165 households (56,000 people) should become resettled households.⁸³ The new urban areas fit into the overall construction projects that symbolize modernisation and at least visually suggest that the life of the Tibetan pastoralists is being developed with the help of the government and that their lifestyle and living standard is more closely approaching that of the rest of China's inhabitants. The idea of the government in promoting sedentarisation of pastoralists in order to enable implementation of development measures was presented by Zukosky:

“While advocating reform, the official legitimating ideology was that without broader administrative or political changes, the pastoral economy would revert to subsistence level and prevent local citizens from developing. Settlement ideologies were based on the idea that pastoral households would become ‘scattered and dispersed’, making it difficult and even impossible for the state to govern. This spatial distribution of pastoral nomadic households was envisioned as points chaotically scattered throughout an abstract political plane. Pastoral households, in a decentralized spatial formation, would produce only for their own basic needs and thus become isolated from broader networks of market and general social change. Settlement, as a way of making society visible and

⁸³ Tibetan member of the Nationalities Cultural Committee of Qinghai Province, interviewed in May 2007.

The book *Sanjiangyuan ziran baohu qu shengtai baohu yu jianshe* presents a number of 55,774 pastoralists (10,142 households) to be resettled within the SNNR area only as part of the *Ecological resettlement Project*. (Chen 2007: 39).

the enabling its control, was seen as the solution so that the state could improve, develop and engineer pastoral society.”⁸⁴

Besides the socioeconomic agenda, the sedentarisation of Tibetan pastoralists also enables better political control of the rangeland area. These new urban spots are easy to reach and each of them also contains a small police station on-site. The presence of police officers might provide better security for the inhabitants of a resettlement or settlement, and participation of representatives of the state’s legal power in solving disputes among the pastoralists. At the same time, the close control of relocated pastoralists can also be seen as an aggressive new turn of policy in Tibetan areas.⁸⁵ After the disturbances in 2008, further sedentarisation measures such as the *Nomadic Settlement Project* (Chin: 游牧民定居工程 you mumin dingju gongcheng) have been implemented. In Qinghai Province the *Nomadic Settlement Project*, introduced in 2009, is intended to have a final effect on all remaining pastoral households that have not participated in other resettlement or settlement projects before. However, the accumulation of pastoralists in one spot also enables faster communication and easier assembly of people, which could also result in potential political conflicts. Therefore, to prevent the possibility of political alliances being formed within the resettlement and settlement villages, at least theoretically the size of these villages should not exceed 100 to 150 households.⁸⁶ In reality, many of the new villages exceed this limitation.

2.2. Environmental protection

Besides the socioeconomic reforms to fill the widening social gap between China’s rich East and poor West, improve the living standard of the households in Western China and secure political stability of the nation as a whole, another issue is gaining increasing interest on the part of the government. The signs of

⁸⁴ Zukosky 2007: 119.

⁸⁵ Richardson 2007: 6.

⁸⁶ AD XXXIV: 6. The resettlement site size limit was suggested after several demonstrations occurred in resettlements of people from the Three Gorges dam construction area, which was used as a model for the Sanjiangyuan resettlement. (Jing, Cui, Mu, Xu, Xiao 2007: 197-205).

worsening environmental conditions could not be ignored any more, especially after the drought in the lower reaches of the Yellow River in 1997 and the massive flooding along the Yangtze River in 1998; hence the Central Government included environmental protection into the wider schedule of the *Great Opening of the West* development strategy^{87, 88} Environmental protection based on numerous so-called ecological constructions became the second major development strategy after the huge infrastructure projects designed to attract private and foreign investors and enterprises linked to the global economy. Premier Wen Jiabao explained the development priorities for Western China as follows:

Viewed from the country as a whole, 80 percent of the soil erosion is in the western region, more than 90 percent of newly added areas of desertification every year is also in the region, and the sources of the major rivers are there too... Stepping up the protection and improvement of the ecological environment in the region has a direct bearing on ensuring the ecological safety of the country and bringing about sustainable economic and social development nationwide...

...Strengthening the protection and improvement of the ecological environment is an important task in the large-scale development of the western region. It is necessary to carry out in real earnest such major ecological projects as those for returning farmland to forests, restoring grazing areas to grasslands, protecting natural forests, and preventing and controlling the sources of dust storms and desertification...it is essential to strengthen inspection, to check and accept the implementation of such policies, and to strictly follow the standards set by the state.⁸⁹

The main rivers of China have their sources on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, and the sand brought to the eastern metropolises during the sandstorm period

⁸⁷ Yeh 2005: 11.

⁸⁸ The first environmental law in China was promulgated in 1978, the first Grassland Law was issued in 1985. (Chen 2010: 143-145).

⁸⁹ Chinese premier outlines priorities for *Great Opening of the West*, February 2005 (Yeh 2005: 10)

comes from the expanding deserts in the west (see figure 5). The environmental protection of the High Plateau thus is becoming an important issue for the whole country.



Figure 5: Mugetan desert in Guinan County, July 2007

2.2.1. Overgrazing - the reason for degradation of grassland ecosystem?

It is being commonly declared that 90 percent of China's grassland currently suffers from a certain level of deterioration.⁹⁰ In Qinghai Province in 1998, the degradation had already affected almost 24 percent (about 1,300 million *mu*) of the province's grasslands.⁹¹ The Chinese government cites excessive herding activity and overgrazing, and an infestation of plateau pikas (*Ochotona curzoniae*)⁹² as the main reasons for the recent rapid degradation of the grassland ecosystem.⁹³ How does it come about that the pastoralism that has been practiced on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau for at least a thousand years⁹⁴ has

⁹⁰ Jiang 2006.

⁹¹ AD XV: 100.

⁹² Smith, Foggin 1999: 235-240.

⁹³ Zhao 2007: 94-101.

⁹⁴ Goldstein 1996: 3.

begun to cause such severe damage mainly during the last decades? An increasing amount of research studies suggests that there are other important factors that caused the current situation on the grassland such as global climate change, or even the various governmental programmes implemented since the 1950s⁹⁵. In trying to understand the changing grassland conditions on the Tibetan rangelands, the influence of the state land reforms launched by the Central Government since the 1950s must be taken into account. It was only through the implementation of land reforms that the traditional pastoralism was changed and probably gave way to incorrect use of pastureland and local overgrazing, etc. Most of the frequently mentioned reasons for grassland degradation, such as ‘in-migration’ and population increase, increased burrowing mammal populations due to ineffective control and rampant hunting of predators, increased concentration of livestock near winter settlements, reduced mobility due to restrictive pasture tenure, breakdowns of traditional regulatory mechanisms and the lack of government investment in rangeland and livestock marketing infrastructure, are factors that are all strongly influenced by governmental policies⁹⁶. Large land use reforms like the collectivisation in the 1950s and then again the decollectivisation of land in the 1980s have disrupted and changed pastoralists’ attitudes towards land and livestock. During the period of people’s communes, all herders had to put their animals into collectives and subsequently make decisions regarding production and use of the rangeland collectively. The traditional herding system was replaced by a new policy of calling for increased animal husbandry production⁹⁷. Within the collectives, new methods of fencing, cross-breeding, veterinary services and artificial forage were also initiated and in many places the rangeland was ploughed up to plant grain⁹⁸. When the system of collectivisation did not show the desired improvement, the Central Government initialised a new policy in 1983 of *Household Responsibility System*⁹⁹. The land and animals that previously used to belong to the communes were contracted

⁹⁵ Ho 2005, Harris 2010: 1-12.

⁹⁶ Richard, Yan, Du 2006: 84.

⁹⁷ Goldstein 1996: 2.

⁹⁸ Miller 1999: 17.

⁹⁹ Miller 1999: 17.

out¹⁰⁰ to the households according to the number of household members for 20 to 30 years. These contracts could be subsequently extended to 50 years¹⁰¹. The land distribution led to property fencing, which severely limited the herding mobility and flexibility on which the Tibetan pastoralism was based. After this so-called privatisation, the land still remained the property of the state and the households only obtained use rights for a certain period of time. The fact that the land is not their own and the lack of certainty about use rights after the expiry of the contract might be a reason why the pastoralists do not invest into the land and its sustainability¹⁰².



Figure 6: Pika, Zeku County, August 2007

As a result, some pastoralists exploit the land without taking the long-term consequences into account and do actually support grassland degradation through overgrazing by keeping as much livestock as possible. These

¹⁰⁰ For obtaining the land use rights, the pastoral households must pay tax to the state, which currently varies between 10-30 RMB and 5-10 RMB per *mu*, depending on the size of the contracted land. Pastoral households from remote and poor areas defined as such by the township and county government can be exempt from paying state land taxes. (AD XIX: article 4 and 8).

¹⁰¹ Bauer, Nima 2009: 23-33.

¹⁰² Ho 2005.

arguments suggest that it is not necessarily the traditional way of life of the pastoralists on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, but more probably the disturbance and alteration of the frail symbiotic existence of the pastoralists in the rangelands caused by the policies implemented by the Central Government that had the dominant impact resulting in the negative changes of the ecosystem.

The question of the harmful influence of the pikas (see figure 6) on the fragile ecosystem in Qinghai Province has also been heatedly discussed by the scientists at the Institute of Zoology with the Chinese Academy of Sciences¹⁰³. It is not disputed that pikas eat the roots of grass, but it is also not proved that they are the main factor in increasing grassland degradation. According to the pastoralists, there always used to be many pikas on the pasturelands, but nevertheless their number might have increased as many of their predators disappeared during the early decades of the PRC. During this period, many wild animals were killed in order to feed troops and workers stationed on the Plateau, which caused a food supply collapse for carnivores and led to a significant decrease in their numbers. At that time, the killing of wildlife was not moderated by any ideology of wildlife conservation¹⁰⁴.

There are definitely grassland areas that also suffer from high degradation because of a recent imbalance between the number of livestock and the grassland capacity, and an increasing number of pikas that like to inhabit the earth banks that develop in eroded areas. In the areas with no grass or only short grass, the pikas are also able to see their predators easily. For this reason, pikas are moving into black-earth banks, degraded areas or even into the bare banks that grow along the infrastructural construction sites like roads, etc. The pikas eat the roots of the plants that grow at the earth edges and in this way can add to the enlargement of the degraded area. Elimination of some parts of the grassland structure, such as grazing animals or rodents¹⁰⁵ will therefore probably not solve the current deterioration problem.

¹⁰³ *China Daily* May 2004.

¹⁰⁴ Goldstein 1996: 7.

¹⁰⁵ "Poisoning the pikas began in 1958 and continues today. In Qinghai Province alone, 208,000 square kilometres, a rather huge part of the province, has been controlled. Some areas have been poisoned two or three times."(*China Daily*, May 2004). According to the Chinese

Within the environmental policy, large parts of the grassland are being enclosed and their use as pasture is limited or completely prohibited. Livestock numbers are being reduced and pastoralists are being relocated away from the protected areas. The biggest protection area of the Three Rivers' Headwaters spreads over almost half of Qinghai Province. Within this area, a stricter environmental policy is being implemented, hence the Tibetan pastoralists, whose way of life binds them tightly to the grassland environment, are directly affected by any policy with an environmental basis. Yet the policy does not consider the Tibetan pastoralist to be part of the grassland. According to the policy agenda, in order to allow for recovery of the vegetation, the pastoralists have to be removed first and have to be subjected to the introduced sedentarisation measures. The existence of the Three Rivers' Headwaters National Nature Reserve is an important factor in large-scale sedentarisation of Tibetan pastoralists in Qinghai Province and it is necessary to understand its structure and policy schema.

statistics for eliminating both underground pikas and pikas living on the earth surface in Qinghai Province, during the period of 1982-1994 the elimination works were carried out on an area of 129,973,700 square meters, (in Zeku County on 14,700,600 square meters) (AD XVI: 80), in 1998 the elimination area in the whole province covered 25,057,700 *mu* (in Zeku County 5,067,800 *mu*) (AD XV: 117).

3. The Three Rivers' Headwaters National Nature Reserve

In recent years, the deterioration of vegetation, shrinking wetlands, declining water levels of the rivers and lakes and increasing desertification of the grassland¹⁰⁶ have impacted the region where the three most important rivers of China have their source in Qinghai Province. These are the Yellow River (Chin: 黄河 Huang he), the Yangtze River (Chin: 长江 Chang jiang) and the Mekong River (Chin: 澜沧江 Lancang jiang). The conditions of the high plateau environment also have a downstream impact on the main Chinese river system which supplies most of lowland China with fresh water. Increasing erosion leads to sedimentation downstream, which in turn causes flooding in low-lying regions. This danger encouraged the state to include environmental protection of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau within the *Great Opening of the West* development strategy¹⁰⁷ and as a response to the deterioration of grassland areas, the State Forestry Administration and the Government of Qinghai Province established in May 2000 the Three Rivers' Headwaters Nature Reserve (Chin: 三江源自然保护区 Sanjiangyuan ziran baohu qu) (Sanjiangyuan). The Nature Reserve is named after the headwaters of the three greatest rivers of China. The Yangtze River, with its length of around 6,300 km, is the longest river in Asia and supplies about 32.2 percent¹⁰⁸ of the Chinese population with water. The Yellow River is the second longest in China (5,464 km) and supplies about 8.2 percent of the Chinese population with fresh water. The Mekong River, with its length of 4,200 km, is one of the most important rivers of Southeast Asia. Most rivers within the borders of Qinghai Province flow into one of these three big streams, therefore this area is also called the 'water tower' (Chin: 中华水塔 zhonghua shuita)¹⁰⁹ of the whole of China.

¹⁰⁶ Wang 2007: 20-23.

¹⁰⁷ Yeh 2005: 9-29.

¹⁰⁸ Foggin 2005: 6.

¹⁰⁹ Gong 2006 (II): 83-88.



Figure 7: The Sanjiangyuan monument, Yushu, July 2007

The Sanjiangyuan area includes the precipitation catchment area of the three big rivers which is 318,100 square kilometres. For easier administration, the province included entire counties into the Sanjiangyuan even though these areas overlap only partly with the catchment area of the three rivers. As a result, the total area of Sanjiangyuan was enlarged to 363,100 square kilometres (the Qinghai Province has a total area of 720 000 square kilometres). Sanjiangyuan includes 16 counties (119 administrative areas of townships and towns and one pasture area in Zeku County) of Yushu 玉树, Guoluo 果洛, Hainan 海南 and Huangnan 黄南 Prefectures and the Tangula township (Chin: 唐古拉山乡 Tanggula shan xiang) of Haixi 海西 Prefecture. The total population is 650,000,

of which almost 470,000 are engaged in animal husbandry. Over 90 percent of the Sanjiangyuan population are Tibetans.¹¹⁰

Following the establishment of the nature reserve, its Management Bureau was founded in 2001 and finally in January 2003 the Sanjiangyuan Nature Preservation Zone attained national status¹¹¹ and became the Three Rivers' Headwaters National Nature Reserve¹¹² (SNNR) (see figure 7). The SNNR refers only to an area of special protection needs, such as forests, parts of grassland and wild animal habitats for endangered species such as the Tibetan antelope, the wild yak, the snow leopard or the black-necked crane. It spreads over 152,300 square kilometres, which is the main implementation area of state-financed environmental policies. Included in this area are about 200,000 inhabitants.¹¹³ The SNNR area is divided into 18 conservation areas with three types of zones (see figure 8): core zone, buffer zone and experimental zone. The core zones (31,218 square kilometres) cover mainly the areas around the major river sources, intended to protect endangered animals and plants. Eight core zones protect wetlands and their ecosystems, nine protect forest areas and one protects high-altitude grassland. Within the core zone, no human activities are allowed. The buffer zones (39,242 square kilometres) serve to promote environmental conservation, but a limited amount of animal husbandry according to the capacity of the pastures should be allowed here; hence Qinghai Province manifests a wider implementation of sedentarisation measures than other Tibetan regions. The experimental zone (81,882 square kilometres) should remain populated, including towns, farmland and cultural relics, and open for tourism and research activities¹¹⁴. However also mining activities take place in this area. Each core zone is surrounded by a buffer zone, which in turn is surrounded by an experimental zone.

¹¹⁰ Chen 2007: 1, 32, 157.

¹¹¹ Foggin 2005: 5.

¹¹² Gong 2006 (II): 356.

¹¹³ AD IV.

¹¹⁴ Chen 2007: 34.

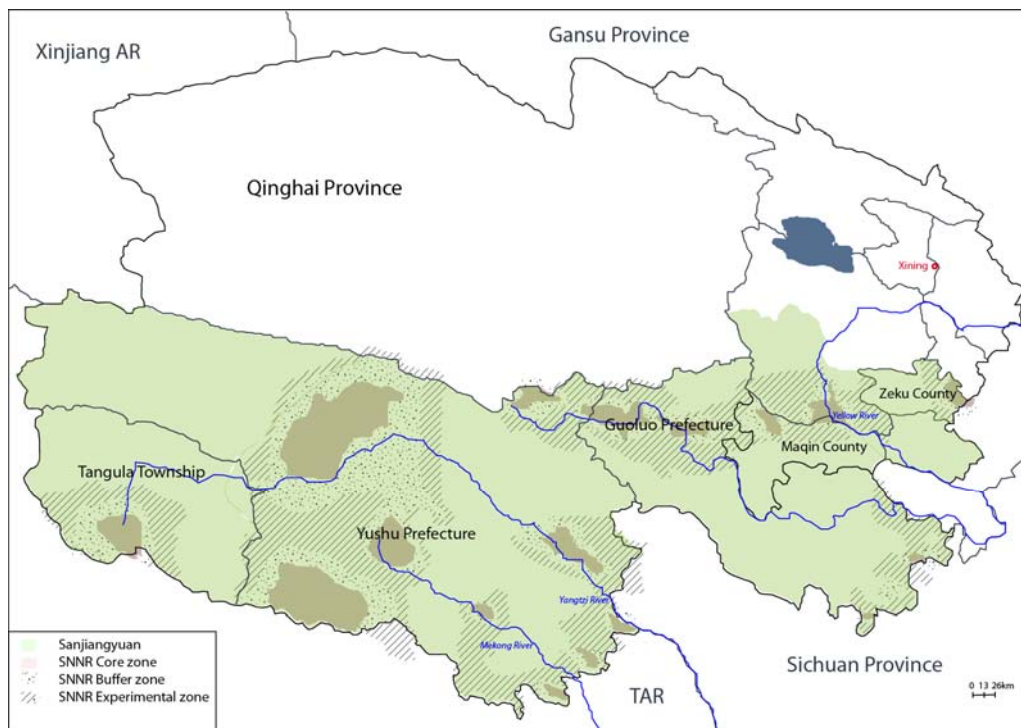


Figure 8: Map of SNNR conservation zones¹¹⁵

The Central Government only invests directly into these listed areas of special protection; the environmental and socioeconomic projects, implemented in the rest of the Sanjiangyuan area must be financed from the budget granted each year to the Provincial Government¹¹⁶. According to Qinghai News, since 2003 an amount of 1.23 billion RMB has been invested into the region by Central and Local Governments. After 2005, another 3.13 billion RMB will have been invested within the *Great Opening of the West* development strategy...

"...to replenish 96.58 million *mu* (16 million acres) of land traditionally used for grazing. Grazing will be prohibited for five years after the replenishment work...The project also includes infrastructure construction for local farmers and herdsman, and other ancillary

¹¹⁵ According to: Chen 2007.

¹¹⁶ „For instance Qinghai Province invested 780 million yuan to establish and protect the Sanjiangyuan area, closing off 5.11 million hectares of pastures and relocating 7,048 households (33,572 people).“ (Li 2011: 74).

programs... It is hoped that a sustainable balance between environment and social-economy will be achieved in Sanjiangyuan by 2020."¹¹⁷

3.1. The case study area of Zeku County, part of Sanjiangyuan

Huangnan Prefecture covers an area of 18,900 square kilometres, a figure that corresponds to 2.56 percent of the area of Qinghai Province in its entirety. The grassland covers 84.5 percent of the prefecture area and most of it is in use. The two pastoralist counties of Huangnan Prefecture, Zeku and Henan, are included into the Sanjiangyuan region. Part of the area of these counties, 2932.99 square kilometres of Zeku and Henan, also belongs to the special protection area of the SNNR, of which 91.5 percent (2684.32 square kilometres) belongs to Zeku and 8.5 percent (248.61 square kilometres) belongs to Henan, representing 1.93 percent of the whole SNNR area in Qinghai Province.



Figure 9: SNNR conservation zones in Zeku County¹¹⁸

Three regions of Zeku County, DuoHEMAO Township, Maixiu Town of Duofudun Township and Xibusha Township, which compose the Maixiu core zone are included (see figure 9). These regions are inhabited by 3,637

¹¹⁷ Qinghai News 2005.

¹¹⁸ According to: Chen 2007.

households (20,005 people), of which 563 households (3,098 people) live within a core zone, 1,198 households (6,590 people) live within a buffer zone and 1,875 households (10,317 people) live within an experimental zone in Zeku County.¹¹⁹ The Zeku core zone includes the Maixiu forest region (Chin: 麦秀林区 maixiu linq) and the Guanxiu forest region (Chin: 官秀林区 guanxiu linq). The core zones of Zeku and Henan occupy an area of 543.42 square kilometres (1.74 percent of the core zone area of the whole province), the buffer zones 1047.55 square kilometres (2.67 percent of the buffer zone area of the whole province) and the experimental zones cover an area of 1342.02 square kilometres (1.64 percent of the experimental zone area of the whole province)¹²⁰. The situation of Zeku County within the Sanjiangyuan area and the incorporated special protection zone let this county to experience the full-scale implementation of projects with environmental background, including the reduction of herding activities, the exclusion of pastureland and the relocation of pastoralists away from the grassland into new urban areas.

¹¹⁹ AD IX: 1.

¹²⁰ AD IX: 1.

4. The substance and composition of the development policy programmes resulting in sedentarisation of Tibetan pastoralists in the Sanjiangyuan area and in Qinghai Province

According to western opinion, there persists a general impression of the existence of a kind of centrally directed programme that focuses on sedentarisation of Tibetan pastoralists that is being implemented in Tibetan pastoral areas. However, there is no one programme that resettles Tibetan pastoralists, and moreover the majority of the individual projects that use the measure of resettlement or settlement do not have it as their major aim, or at least not officially. More accurately, the sedentarisation process is being used as a tool to reach other goals, such as local environmental or socioeconomic improvement. The development programmes do not target or even necessarily involve the Tibetan pastoralists as prime subjects of their projects; indeed, for official policy the pastoralists often seem to be just objects that are in the way of the goal, for example an environmental project, and must make way for its implementation. The policy planning bureau does not consider pastoralists as a part of the grassland environment and deals with them separately, which often leads the pastoralists to disregard towards the implementation of numerous projects in the grassland area. Consequently, the situation regarding sedentarisation is particularly complex, as by necessity it consists of different project fragments from environmental and socioeconomic policy, along with measures to strengthen political and economical control over pastoral areas. The Sanjiangyuan area seems to be the region most affected, because of the large implementation scale of projects with environmental background and stricter implementation control. In addition to the environmental focus that concentrates on conservation and regeneration of the ecosystem, there are likewise projects that overlap with the socioeconomic development proposal and include, for example, the extension of urban districts or network and infrastructural constructions. As Sanjiangyuan is predominantly a pastoral area, and the pastoralists' way of life is strongly connected to the natural environment, the result is a high dependence of the people on the local grassland resources. Therefore, any interference, of whatever degree, upon the

environment, grassland management or local infrastructure significantly influences the life and livelihood patterns of the Tibetan pastoralists.

4.1. Environmental protection and ecological construction in the Sanjiangyuan area

The Sanjiangyuan policy for environmental protection and ecological construction consists of three major parts:

- The *Ecological Protection and Construction Project* (Chin: 生态保护与建设项目 shengtai baohu yu jianshe xiangmu).
- The *Farmers' and Pastoralists' Production and Basic Living Facilities Construction Project* (Chin: 农牧民生产生活基础设施建设项目 nongmumin shengchan shenghuo jichu sheshi jianshe xiangmu).
- The *Sustainability Project* (Chin: 支撑项目 zhicheng xiangmu).

Each of these projects in turn consists of several subprojects. The *Ecological Protection and Construction Project* contains the:

- *Turning Pastureland into Grassland Project*, responsible for fencing and grain and fodder subsidies.
- *Turning Farmland into Forest or into Grassland Project* (Chin: 退耕还林还草工程 tuigeng huanlin huancao gongcheng).
- *Putting in Order Degraded Land* (Chin: 生态恶化土地治理 shengtai ehua tudi zhili), project responsible for enclosing of mountains and afforestation, prevention of desertification, wetland protection and restoring black earth banks to order¹²¹.
- *Fire Protection of Forests and Grassland* (Chin: 森林草原防火 senlin caoyuan fanghuo).

¹²¹ Black earth banks (Chin: 黑土滩 heitu tan): Due to the worsening of the ecological situation, the water level in lakes and rivers on the grassland is falling. The lakes are drying out, the rivers are shrinking and the glaciers are melting, which in turn leads to degeneration of the plant life, hence large areas of the grassland are turning into infertile 'black earth banks'. (Gong 2006 (I): 198).

- *Prevention of Harm Caused by Mice* (Chin: 鼠害防治 shu hai fangzhi).
- *Water and Land Preservation* (Chin: 水土保持 shui tu baochi).
- *Construction of Nature Reserve Area Management Facilities and Capacities* (Chin: 保护区管理设施与能力建设 baohu qu guanli sheshi yu nengli jianshe) responsible for the nature reserve management station and management department, boundary markers, wildlife protection and fishing prohibition in lakes and wetlands.

The *Farmers' and Nomads' Production and Living Basic Facilities Construction Project* correlates with specific socioeconomic purposes and includes:

- *Ecological Resettlement Project* (Chin: 生态移民工程 shengtai yimin gongcheng).
- *Small Town Constructions* (Chin: 小城镇建设 xiao cheng zhen jianshe).
- *Grassland Protection Set* (Chin: 草地保护配套 caodi baohu peitao) responsible for constructions to raise livestock, establish energy sources and secure forage grass and grain irrigation.
- *Drinking Water Supply for People and Livestock* (Chin: 人畜饮水 ren xu yinshui).

The *Sustainability Project* includes:

- *Man-Made Rains* (Chin: 人工增雨 rengong zeng yu).
- *Scientific Sustainability and Environment Monitoring* (Chin: 科技支撑与生态监测 keji zhicheng yu shengtai jiance) responsible for research, monitoring of the environment and technological training.¹²²

The magnitude and the final implementation of these projects differs throughout the Sanjiangyuan area. Depending on local conditions and needs, some places focus on wildlife preservation, while in other places repairing the

¹²² Chen 2007: 37-40.

grassland or improvement of living conditions of the pastoralists are the main goals. In Zeku County between 2003 and 2006, the local government determined the following priority points:

- *Turning Pastureland into Grassland Project.*
- *Ecological Resettlement Project* and completion of facility sets.
- Closing hillsides to facilitate afforestation.
- Fencing.
- *Fire Protection of Forests and Grassland.*
- *Prevention of Harm Caused by Mice.*
- Comprehensive administration of black earth banks.
- Constructions for raising livestock.
- Energy source construction.
- *Drinking Water Supply for People and Livestock.*
- Solar cooker supplements.¹²³

The majority of the above-mentioned projects include sedentarisation measures, such as *Turning Pastureland into Grassland Project*, *Ecological Resettlement Project* or *Small Town Constructions*. Other are either connected to or encourage the sedentarisation of the pastoralists, for example through constructions to raise livestock and other facilities and reduction of pastureland, or boosts to agriculture, such as the *Man-Made Rains*.

Although each project has clearly defined outlines, in reality it is difficult to distinguish between them, as they often overlap and are modified to suit the local requirements. At the beginning of the implementation of the policies, the individual resettlement and settlement sites were designed as a part of a particular project, for example *Turning Pastureland into Grassland Project*, *Ecological Resettlement Project*, etc. After the implementation, a trial phase followed, yet it was too short to show the actual long-term impact of the project on the environment and the society of affected Tibetan pastoralists. If any complications occurred, for example if the pastoralists disliked the new living conditions and returned to the grassland or they did not adapt quickly

¹²³ AD X: 1.

enough to the new environment and were not able to ensure sufficient new income through integration into the modern production and service sector within a short period of time, the project was labelled as unsuccessful. In such cases, the local government usually renamed the sedentarisation project and proceeded without significant changes to the implementation rules and methods that would correct the reasons of the former setback.¹²⁴ The numerous policy programmes that often overlap with their agendas and the frequent switching from one project to another or changing of official terms and projects labelling make it difficult even for the implementing officials, let alone for the researchers or NGOs to keep a clear overview.¹²⁵ In addition, the pastoralists usually do not know the policy background of the particular relocation project that they have become involved in. Moreover, the presence of the SNNR area within the Sanjiangyuan region sometimes leads to confusion concerning the data about the degree of implementation of the policies. There are various environmental projects that include grassland restoration and prohibition of grazing activities, connected to resettlement, fencing, etc. in the SNNR area¹²⁶, yet at the same time the identical policy is being implemented in the whole of the Sanjiangyuan region.¹²⁷ It is therefore difficult to estimate the total number of pastoralist households involved in the whole of Qinghai Province, let alone in the whole of the Tibetan pastoralist area. The official numbers of affected people, for example those included in the resettlement and settlement projects, presented in this dissertation should therefore be taken with care and seen merely as approximate data.

4.2. The sedentarisation process in Tibetan pastoral areas

The implementation of current projects has accelerated the sedentarisation of Tibetan pastoralists within Sanjiangyuan and other grassland areas of China, especially during the last five years. However, the sedentarisation of pastoral

¹²⁴ A 26-year-old Tibetan member of an environmental NGO, interviewed in July 2007.

¹²⁵ Du Fachun mentions a relocation of about 80,000 Tibetan pastoralists by the end of 2005. This number refers to the total amount of people resettled within the *Turning Pastureland into Grassland and Ecological Resettlement Projects*. (Du 2006: 46). See also: Chen 2007: 36-151 and AD XIV.

¹²⁶ Foggin 2005: 2.

¹²⁷ Chen 2007: 37-40.

societies in Central Asia is in no sense a new phenomenon. The Tibetan pastoralist way of life has long stood in contrast to the modernisation efforts of state governments. To adapt a pastoral society to the overall trajectory of development, a government must apply indirect methods, such as establishment of administrative and restrictive boundaries, or direct methods, for example implementation of sedentarisation projects, collectivisation of land or the extension of infrastructure¹²⁸. In China, the sedentarisation process started as far back as the 1950s with the first interventions of the Central Government in the traditional methods of animal husbandry, through their trying to re-educate the pastoralists¹²⁹. The collectivisation of land and livestock and implementation of agricultural and land reforms disrupted the traditional patterns of Tibetan pastoralism. After the collapse of the communes in 1981, new measures were taken to ease the sedentarisation of Tibetan pastoralists. The redistribution of land and livestock among individual households during the decollectivisation of the 1980s/1990s brought a certain revitalisation of traditional Tibetan pastoralism¹³⁰, but at the same time the introduction of the *Household Responsibility System* with its approach of land distribution grounded on poverty alleviation and followed by fencing (see figure 10) was a step into a ‘transition from a rural ‘nomadic’ lifestyle towards the increased sedentarisation of a people’¹³¹, resulting later in numerous resettlement and settlement sites that are spreading through the grassland. At this time as well, the first signs of infrastructure like roads, schools and health centres also appeared in the grasslands¹³².

With each household being granted usage rights for its part of pastureland, fences were introduced to stress the division of the pastureland and to avoid uncontrolled movement of the livestock. With individual areas of winter grassland property, it became easier for the pastoralists to construct permanent houses¹³³, an end strongly supported by the government through the *Project to Increase Living Comfort* and the *Set of Four* project.

¹²⁸ Kreutzmann 2009: 79-107.

¹²⁹ See also: Gruschke 2006.

¹³⁰ Manderscheid 2001: 173-182.

¹³¹ Foggin 2008: 28.

¹³² Miller 1999: 17.

¹³³ In some areas, the pastoralists used to construct permanent houses on the winter grassland even before the adoption of the reforms of the Central Government. See also: Gruschke 2005.



Figure 10: Pastures divided by fences; Hongyuan County, Sichuan, October 2009

To persuade the pastoralists of the advantages of solid housing in certain areas, test households were selected to try out the new housing. For this purpose, in addition to the families of pastoral community leaders, former monks and prisoners were also selected, as they had already experienced the shift to living in buildings¹³⁴.

Measures like fencing and the construction of permanent houses restrains the mobility and limits the flexibility of Tibetan pastoralists to move livestock¹³⁵. An increase in the number of livestock, in combination with the size inflexibility of the allocated pastures, can result in locally exceeded grassland capacity and lead to overgrazing. In order to avoid this result, further

¹³⁴ For example, in Dangqian village in Maqin County (Qinghai Province), the government suggested the building of a winter house for each pastoral household in 1980. Up until then, the villagers were accustomed to living in tents and were suspicious about buildings, so the government decided to test the houses with five households of ex-prisoners and monks. In the houses of the testing families, the rest of the village could persuade themselves that the houses were actually warm and dry and so it was agreed to build one for each household. These houses were built from wood and earth with financial and material support from the government. (Tibetan pastoral community leader from Maqin County, interviewed in October 2009)

¹³⁵ Bedunah, Harris 2002.

governmental measures are being taken to protect the grassland, resulting in further enclosures of pastoral areas and further relocation of pastoralists from grasslands with a high degree of degradation. As a consequence, the living space of the pastoralists and livestock is continuously shrinking. In areas with severe degradation, the grassland cannot support enough livestock to secure the income of a pastoralist household. At the same time, regional development and offers of material goods also brought an increased demand for cash on the part of the pastoralists. These circumstances have stimulated a growing number of pastoralists to seek alternative sources of income to animal husbandry and consequently stimulate relocation to urban settlements. Thus the actual impact of the implementation of the *Great Opening of the West* development strategy on Tibetan pastoralists is not only their increased sedentarisation, but also a strong tendency towards the complete abolition of pastoralism as a whole.

The current projects with the most intensive resettlement consequences are the *Turning Pastureland into Grassland Project* and the *Ecological Resettlement Project*. In 2009, the project of *Nomadic Settlement* was introduced, which further accelerated the sedentarisation of Tibetan pastoralists. Wang, Song and Hu present a number of 86 established migration communities with 61,889 people and 13,305 households moved from the Sanjiangyuan area to cities and towns within the *Ecological Resettlement Project* by the end of 2007.¹³⁶ According to the Qinghai Administrative Institute, concerning the SNNR, between its establishment in 2003 and the end of 2009, only over 15,000 Tibetan pastoralists have been moved to immigrant points such as resettlement sites. Additionally, within the implementation of the *Turning Pastureland into Grassland Project*, more than 30 local immigrant communities were built to accommodate relocated herdsmen. By the end of 2009, within the SNNR area more than 6,800 households of herdsmen were resettled to such immigrant spots. The entire project implementation area of SNNR concerns 42,300 households and about 200,000 people. The currently implemented sedentarisation projects should affect over 80 percent of local pastoralists. In the whole of Qinghai Province, the overall sedentarisation is intended to be completed by the year 2014. By then, 134.3 thousand households, more than

¹³⁶ Wang, Song, Hu 2010: 444.

500,000 pastoralists, shall have started a new life in one of the new urban areas.¹³⁷

4.3. The *Ecological Resettlement Project*

Shengtai yimin, also sometimes translated as *Ecological Migration*, was already an extant entity in the 1980s. As a part of the national poverty alleviation approach, in 1982 residents from areas in Ningxia affected by serious degradation had to be resettled to a different location. The relocation concept continued during the Eight-Seven Poverty Alleviation Reinforcement Plan of 1994-2000. In order to alleviate poverty and protect the natural environment, many people were resettled during the implementation period of this policy. After the year 2000, the *Great Opening of the West* development strategy adopted the relocation concept and implemented it on an even larger scale.¹³⁸ The *Ecological Resettlement Project* is managed by the Sanjiangyuan office belonging to the Development and Reform Committee of the Qinghai Province, and its aim is development of western regions through poverty alleviation and improvement of the socioeconomic situation of pastoralist households. Immediately, it should benefit the pastoralists through the offering of training courses to improve their skills. Additionally, it should help to increase the income of pastoralist households, reduce the mortality of livestock, improve selling rates of animal products, and accelerate the fattening of small lambs in order to be able to sell them in the first year. The livestock turnover should be increased and animal husbandry improved through the use of animal sheds which can also be used as greenhouses to plant vegetables during the summer months. The living standard of the pastoralists should become more comfortable, since the *Ecological Resettlement Project*, for example, should also provide water, electricity, roads, schools, medical and veterinary care and television broadcasting to each village in addition to providing the pastoralists with access to science and technology and helping them to absorb, extend and apply the new knowledge gained. The pastoralists should be taught the

¹³⁷ Presentation of Qinghai Administration Institute leadership member in Halle in December 2009.

¹³⁸ Du 2006: 45-46.

prevention and cure of animal diseases and how to make effective use of the sheds for animal and vegetable production, etc. Additionally, through easier access to towns from the resettlements, the pastoralists should have better access to the job market and should easily be able to increase their income through finding new employment. At least, this is the vision according to the plan of the Central Government, but the reality often appears very different.

4.3.1. Environmental benefits of the *Ecological Resettlement Project*

The *Ecological Resettlement Project* also has an environmental focus in its agenda. According to the government, the potential benefits from the implementation of sedentarisation measures such as *Ecological Resettlement Project* and adoption of grassland resting and a rotational grazing system is the reduction of pressure on the grassland¹³⁹, which would stimulate the recovery of the grassland vegetation and help the protection of high-altitude animals and natural resources. As a result of the recovery of grassland vegetation, the water level would increase, which would effectively retain the water volume of the Yellow River area. Additionally, grassland recovery would reduce soil erosion and prevent desertification. The implementation of resettlement measures would also result in a better balance of grassland capacity to livestock number, and a reduction in the number of livestock should mitigate the lack of grass for animals in winter. Resettled households have to sell their whole herd of livestock before moving into the new houses¹⁴⁰. However, due to insufficient income opportunities in the new villages, the affected pastoralists oppose this measure¹⁴¹ and try to avoid it. In many areas in Qinghai Province, like Zeku, Henan or Maqin Counties, we can find households that possess a new house and retain their herds at the same time. One reason for this practice is that numerous households split into two, appointing the grandparents as a separate household unit and thus reaping the greatest benefit from the project. These households still have the possibility of abandoning the new house and returning to the grassland if they dislike their new life in the urban environment. The

¹³⁹ Chen 2007: 143.

¹⁴⁰ Member of Qinghai Province Nationalities Cultural Committee, interviewed in July 2008.

¹⁴¹ AD XXXIII.

participant households targeted in the first place are mostly poor ones with no or only a few livestock¹⁴², who are unable to survive on the grassland and have to seek refuge in the new governmental project. The resettlement of such households might have a positive socioeconomic effect for the affected participants, but cannot have a significant influence in relieving the grazing pressure on the grassland, as such households do not possess many animals. Richer households with sufficient income from the grassland are only willing to participate in the resettlement schemes as long as they assume that they can keep their original pastures in addition to receiving a new house, an aim obviously not in accordance with the original idea of the Central Government, being grounded in the centrality of the reduction of grazing pressure on the grassland.

4.3.2. Selection process of *Ecological Resettlement Project* participants

The resettlement selection process is more concerned with fulfilling the required quota for resettled households than with adhering strictly to the environmental goals of the sedentarisation policy or taking into account the benefits for the actual resettlement participants. The implementation of *Ecological Resettlement Project*, as well as of other governmental projects, is more strictly controlled in regions within the Sanjiangyuan areas¹⁴³. In each county is a local government Sanjiangyuan office, responsible for the implementation of livestock reduction and pastoralist sedentarisation. After this local bureau receives from the higher administrative level the numbers of households that should be resettled, it must ensure that enough households will participate on the project. Officially the participation is voluntary, but the set quotas still have to be fulfilled. The project is sufficiently flexible that, if there are insufficient households from one pastoral community willing to move, the quota can be fulfilled by moving additional households from another community. It is only if there are not enough households wanting to resettle

¹⁴² AD XXXIV: 5.

¹⁴³ Outside of the Sanjiangyuan area, we can also find new housing settlements, which are said to be beneficial for socioeconomic development to improve the living standards of pastoral households. Other newly constructed villages accommodate people resettled from an area selected for modernisation construction, for example, dams or other infrastructure projects.

from the whole county that the government assigns the households that are forced to move. The responsible member of local government, or an instructed community leader or member of the local village or herders' committee, only explains the advantages of the new life in a solid urban dwelling to the pastoralists. Consequently, the pastoralists are informed in detail about the benefits, but the mediators often say nothing about the political background and any potential disadvantages connected with the resettlement project, such as the abandonment of the pastures. Additionally, numerous pastoralists do not even have knowledge of written Chinese or Tibetan¹⁴⁴ and cannot read the contract they have to sign. The promising presentation of the resettlement projects strengthened by the fear of future negative consequences from the government if they refuse to participate, together with the factor of strict control of children's school attendance in the West of China, usually leads to extensive interest among the pastoralists and a high number of potential project participants. The number of hopeful participants often exceeds the number of houses that can be supplied by the government in any given year. The high quota of applications from pastoralist households for participation in a resettlement, as mentioned in official reports, results in the impression of a strong willingness among the pastoralists to relocate, and is used by the government as a justification for the resettlement policy. Whether the required resettlement quota can be fulfilled within a scheduled period of time depends in turn on the financial means obtained annually from the Central and Provincial Governments. The available funds are diminished as they are disseminated through all the administrative levels¹⁴⁵ down to the local government, for various reasons such as corruption. Each year, the annual government subsidy suffices for only a certain number of new houses to be built for the pastoralist. The Nationalities Cultural Committee in Xining claims that the houses should be distributed among the pastoralists for free. However, as there are too many applicants for resettlement in some regions, including Zeku County, the households have to pay for their new homes, and the local government uses this situation to earn some additional money.

¹⁴⁴ In 2006, there were 27,809 illiterates among the middle-aged population in Zeku County. The whole population of Zeku County was 60,733 people. (AD XXXI: 3-4).

¹⁴⁵ Chen 2008: 170-237.

4.3.3. *Ecological Resettlement Project in Qinghai Province*

In Qinghai Province, in the Sanjiangyuan area, the *Ecological Resettlement Project* was introduced in 2004. At that time, the plan was to relocate 11,000 people (approximately 2,066 households) from the core zone areas of the SNNR. By the end of 2005, this plan was already fulfilled and 11,373 people (1,756 households) have been resettled.¹⁴⁶



Figure 11: *Laxu resettlement site in Yushu, one of the first resettlement sites in Qinghai Province, July 2007*

The *Ecological Resettlement Project* resettles households from affected regions into newly constructed settlements (see figure 11), which might be in the same county or village, but are sometimes located even within the territory of a different province.

The book *Sanjiangyuan ziran baohu qu shengtai baohu yu jianshe* describes two ways of resettling pastoralist households. First, there is the so-called regional settlement, which means a concentration of pastoralist households of one region in one settlement situated in the original area. Regional settlement

¹⁴⁶ Chen 2007: 143.

focuses on the dispersed housing of the pastoralists within the nature preservation area, in houses inhabited by pastoralists with poor living and production conditions who have not yet settled. The regional settlement approach includes livestock reduction and implementation of a rotary grazing system (where the livestock are rotated through a series of pastures) for the remaining animals and, understandably, settlement constructions, either in regions with little vegetation, where through implementation of livestock reduction, elimination of pikas and fencing measures the grassland degradation can be stopped and the grassland ecosystem restored within a relatively short period of time, or else in pastoral regions on the province borders, where the settlement efforts happen on the spot. The second approach to resettlement discussed in the book is the process termed supra-regional relocation, in other words resettlement away from the original place of living, beyond the county or even the district boundaries, a process that happens in places with severe desertification and degradation, where restoration of the ecosystem within a short period of time is considered impossible.¹⁴⁷

The place selected for construction of a resettlement site must officially fulfil the following requirements: it must have access to drinking water, be suitable for further industrial development, offer convenient living and be easy to administer. Moreover, there must be enough space for potential population growth. As for the houses, they must have sufficient light, air and access to hygienic facilities and green spaces. The houses must conform to the expectations of the pastoralists and the funds invested, and must satisfy the needs of the pastoralists and enable access to transportation, water, electricity and educational and medical care facilities. The selected areas for construction of a resettlement site can be either near the original location of the affected pastoralist households, or in a location with sufficient natural resources and state-owned agricultural land, or close to a nearby township or county town. In reality, the majority of visited resettlements have consisted of uniform houses and only sometimes paved streets. Other facilities mentioned in the implementation plan and designed according to individual resettlement layout schemes have remained uncompleted. Electricity and water networks were

¹⁴⁷ Chen 2007: 144.

rarely connected to every house, public toilets were missing or in a very bad condition, and waste disposal was nonexistent.

The resettlements usually consist of one of following types of houses: either there are two-storey houses with commercial premises (see figure 12) that can serve as a shop on the ground floor and a residential part on the first floor, bungalows with a small yard to plant vegetables (see figure 13) or blocks of flats (see figure 14) situated within already existing towns.



Figure 12: Two-storey houses in the resettlement of rMar stod pastoralists in Tongde County, May 2007

The shops, included in some of the resettlements, are however usually operated by local people from nearby villages, instead of by the relocated pastoralists and the scheduled training in the planting of vegetables did not take place in the resettlements.



Figure 13: Bungalows in the resettlement of rMar stod pastoralists in Huangheyan; July 2007



Figure 14: Resettlement for Maixiu pastoralists in the form of blocks of flats in Tongren town, June 2009

4.3.4. Governmental assistance at resettlement sites

To support adaptation to the urban environment, the government designed possibilities for establishing new income sources such as farming, trading or demonstrating Tibetan traditions to the tourists, and planned vocational training to teach the pastoralists the required skills. Unfortunately, at least during the period of my research until 2011, these plans remained mostly on paper and were not converted into action. The implementation reports of local governments often concede that the available funds are neither sufficient to cover the necessary costs for training of the resettled pastoralists nor do they provide the required resources to enable the pastoralists to start new businesses. In addition, the government scheduled subsidy payments and land tax relief for a period of three to five years for the pastoralists.¹⁴⁸ However, the subsidy measure is only temporary and is insufficient for covering the costs of basic needs. The demand for cash rose enormously after the pastoralists gave up their livestock and became forced to purchase all food and dairy products and even fuel, i.e. yak dung, for money. Lack of education, work qualifications and experience makes it difficult for the former herders to find a new occupation. Hard work on seasonal government construction sites usually remains the only possibility; in Huangnan Prefecture it is possible to earn about 80-100 RMB per day through this route. Working on construction sites is, however, not the favourite option of the resettled pastoralists and the majority of them so far remain dependent on the governmental subsidy or rely on the income from the annual caterpillar fungus (*Ophiocordyceps sinensis*) collection¹⁴⁹. Nonetheless, restrictions in the funds have even resulted in shortages of the scheduled subsidies.

Insufficient governmental assistance in the new urban environment contributes to the poor adaptation of the pastoralists, who, being unable to find a new source of income quickly that is sufficient for providing at least the same living standard as they were used to on the grassland, dislike the resettlement measures. There are also local officials who point out such failures of the implementation process, as they are aware of the adaptation difficulties the pastoralists have in the new villages, and suggest an increase of the subsidy

¹⁴⁸ Chen 2007: 147.

¹⁴⁹ Winkler 2010: 96-108.

amount and an extension of the support period. For example, the Zeku County Sanjiangyuan office recommends raising the government subsidies for house construction from 30,000 to 60,000 RMB within the county and from 35,000 to 100,000 RMB for households that resettled to a different county. Additionally, it suggests an increase in the production support amount to 30,000 RMB and points out that it is not enough to provide only 5,000 RMB, a walking tractor and a greenhouse and expect the pastoralists immediately to start a new life with sufficient income. Finally, this report suggests an extension of the period of state subsidy of 3,000 RMB from 10 years to at least 25 years.¹⁵⁰

The agenda of *Ecological Resettlement Project* also includes the possibility of return to the grassland and animal husbandry after a minimum period of ten years, and after a governmental approval of sufficient grassland recovery. However, this return may become impossible for many pastoralist households. It remains unclear whether the grassland will still be suitable for herding after such a long period of time. Additionally, it is possible that the government will design a new grassland protection project, or that former pastoralists will be unable to purchase a herd big enough to secure their living back on the pastureland due to increasing prices. Finally, whether the new generation which grew up in urban areas will possess enough knowledge and experience in animal husbandry to survive on the grassland as herders is yet another question that raises doubts about the real chance of a return to the previous pastoral way of life.

4.3.5. The *Small Town* project

Associated with the *Ecological Resettlement Project* is the *Small Town* project, aimed at widening and enlarging small urbanisation centres in the SNNR. Encouraging population growth of small towns in the grassland area would stimulate development of local industry, business, culture, education, etc. and strengthen the administrative control of the area. In order to relieve the pressure on the grassland, the population of pastoralists is intended to be reduced by relocating these people to the urban areas of small town seats

¹⁵⁰ AD XXXV.

within the area of the nature preservation zone. The town of Zeku in Zeku County is one such small town where the population is planned to increase. The main focus of future local development is expected to be trade and tourism.¹⁵¹

The number of people directly affected by the *Ecological Resettlement Project* and *Small Town* project is scheduled to reach 55,774 people, a figure that corresponds to 13.65 percent of the Sanjiangyuan pastoralist population.¹⁵²

4.4. The *Turning Pastureland into Grassland Project*

In contrast to the deforestation process, which started with the industrialisation policies of the Great Leap Forward and continued with the quasi-privatisation of the land in the 1980's¹⁵³, in the year 2000 the government designed the projects *Turning Farmland into Forest* and *Turning Farmland into Grassland*. Within these projects, the farmers have to plant trees or grass instead of planting crops.¹⁵⁴ Officially, the farmers can decide voluntarily as to their participation in this project, although in cases where the fields are on slopes with gradients of 25 percent or more, the land must be left fallow.¹⁵⁵ For each *mu* used to plant trees or grass, the farmers obtain a set compensation in cash or in grain from the government; the subsidy is, however, scheduled only for a planning period of five years. For the year 2000, the plan was to implement this policy on 343,505 hectares¹⁵⁶ of land in the west of China. Together with *Turning Farmland into Forest*, a similar project *Closing Mountains for Afforestation* (Chin: 封山绿化 fengshan lühua)¹⁵⁷ was introduced. The goal of this project was to fence off the tops of the mountains and to plant trees within these enclosures. The fences should keep these areas safe from animal access, as the wild animals eat and damage young tree saplings in particular.

¹⁵¹ Chen 2007: 148 – 155.

¹⁵² Chen 2007: 151.

¹⁵³ “When the land was given over to individual households in 1982, another period of dramatic forest-cutting ensued, brought on by worries that the new land contracts might be short-lived (Shapiro 2001: 10). Farmers rushed to cut the trees on their own lands to sell them in the emerging markets.” (Flower 2009: 42).

¹⁵⁴ AD VI: 3; 3.

¹⁵⁵ AD XVIII: 92.

¹⁵⁶ AD XXIV: 83.

¹⁵⁷ AD XXIV: 82.

In the pastoral areas, the projects *Turning Pastureland into Grassland* and *Turning Pastureland into Forest* are equivalent to the *Turning Farmland into Forest or Grassland*. To protect the environment and strengthen ecological construction in the West of China, these projects were designed as a part of the *Great Opening of the West* development strategy¹⁵⁸ aiming to restore “100 million *mu* of pasture to grassland as one of fourteen ‘key projects’ for the western region”¹⁵⁹. The *Turning Pastureland into Grassland Project* is managed by the provincial Agricultural and Animal Husbandry Office and concentrates on the restoration of degraded areas of grassland. This policy is designed for the whole grassland areas of Western China and does not apply exclusively in the Sanjiangyuan region. The first adoption of the *Turning Pastureland into Grassland Project* was carried out in Qinghai Province in the year 2000. One of the testing sites was Dari County (Chin: 达日, Tib: Dar lag) in Guoluo Prefecture, where at that time already 70 percent of the grassland was labelled as degraded, with 16 percent suffering from the worst degradation grade and completely unusable for herding. As a result of the serious grassland damage, many local households had to rent pastureland from neighbouring counties and take their livestock there. Even if grazing on the degraded pastures was banned, resettlement of pastoralists was not part of the pilot project. The area was relatively small and the pastoralists could be diverted to rented land.¹⁶⁰

The *Turning Pastureland into Grassland Project* was designed to improve the grassland ecosystem and solve the situation of herders inhabiting places with insufficient grassland capacity. It was first mentioned in governmental documents concerning grazing removal in 2003 and clearly defined as a grassland development project with the aim being to ‘restore grassland vegetation, improve grassland ecologies, enhance grassland productivity, and promote harmony between grassland ecologies and pastoral production’ in 2005¹⁶¹. The large-scale implementation of *Turning Pastureland into Grassland Project* started in the year 2003 in eight provinces and autonomous regions: Inner Mongolia, Sichuan, Yunnan; TAR, Ningxia, Xinjiang, Gansu

¹⁵⁸ AD V: 2.

¹⁵⁹ ‘Western regions launched 14 key projects.’ Beijing, 2003. (Yeh 2005: 10).

¹⁶⁰ Yeh 2005: 17-21.

¹⁶¹ Bauer, Nima 2009: 31-32.

and Qinghai¹⁶². The rules are similar to the *Turning Farmland into Grassland Project* agenda, in that the pastoralists have to allocate a part of their pastureland to plant grass and obtain compensation in money or grain per *mu* of land¹⁶³ protected from herding by fences.

The content of the *Turning Pastureland into Grassland Project* includes pastureland resting, grazing ban through enclosure fencing, grazing ban through resettlement, planting grass, reducing livestock number and fodder and grain subsidies for the pastoralist households involved.¹⁶⁴

According to the grassland degradation grade, the government decides locally which kind of protection to apply, and various protection zones have been identified through use of the same criterion. In locations with less severe degradation, the pastureland resting approach is implemented, meaning that selected parts of grassland are fenced off and within these enclosures, livestock herding is prohibited either during the spring and autumn period or during the whole period of vegetation growth. This prohibition is correlated with zones for rotational grazing or seasonal bans. In areas with a high degradation grade, a complete grazing ban measure is implemented, in other words a grazing prohibition for a whole year in places that are fenced off. The grazing ban areas are further divided into zones of a complete or temporary grazing ban.¹⁶⁵

Pastoralists that inhabit the grazing ban areas cannot use the pastures anymore and have to be resettled at least for the period of the grazing ban, which corresponds to the measure termed as the *Grazing Ban Resettlement* (Chin: 搬迁禁牧 banqian jinmu). The duration of both the pastureland resting approach and the grazing ban is scheduled for ten years. During this period, any pastoralist households involved can obtain fodder and grain subsidies from the government. The normal fodder and grain subsidy is 3,000 RMB per year per household involved in the grazing ban enclosures. Households involved in the

¹⁶² AD III: 16.

¹⁶³ In Guinan County 贵南县, Hainan Prefecture 海南州, Qinghai Province, inhabited mainly by Tibetan farmers, semi-pastoralists and pastoralists, local people decide by themselves the size of the area for implementing the *Turning Pastureland/Farmland into Grassland* policy. The annual compensation sustains of 20 RMB and 200 kilograms of grain per *mu* of farmland and of 160 RMB per *mu* of pastureland. The pastureland must remain unused for at least eight years before it can be used for herding again. (A member of Guinan County Office for Nature Preservation interviewed in July 2007)

¹⁶⁴ AD XXIII: 117.

¹⁶⁵ Yeh 2005: 16.

Grazing Ban Resettlement in Yushu and Guoluo Prefectures receive 6,000 RMB annually. In Huangnan and Hainan Prefectures the annual subsidy amounts only to 3,000 RMB per household. The forage and grain subsidies for the households involved in the *Turning Pastureland into Grassland Project* and *Ecological Resettlement Project* are managed by the prefecture and county Agricultural Departments and Finance Departments. Subsidy funds are maintained in a special account and managed by a qualified person. Officially, the subsidy amount for each project in each county must be approved individually by the Prefecture Agriculture Department, after which the county Agriculture Department distributes the money to selected townships where these projects have been implemented. The amount of money provided is then distributed according to the definition of the prefecture department.¹⁶⁶ According to pastoralists interviewed, the subsidy amount changes every year and the payment is irregular.

4.4.1. Livestock reduction and the *Grazing Ban Resettlement*

The households affected by the *Turning Pastureland into Grassland Project* measure have an obligation to reduce the number of their livestock. Pastoralist households that inhabit the grassland should be aware of the grassland capacity rules and adjust the number of animals to the grassland capacity. Currently, officially authorized experts measure the local grassland capacity and eventually present the result to local community leaders, who then allot the necessary livestock reduction quota to the pastoralist households. As a result, a balance between livestock and grassland should be achieved. Livestock that overloads the grassland must be sold in the same year in which the *Turning Pastureland into Grassland Project* was implemented. Households under the grazing ban that remain in the grassland must optimize the number of livestock to the grassland capacity and reduce excessive stocks of animals.¹⁶⁷ Only households with real economical difficulties can enjoy a longer deadline, but they still must accomplish the tasks of livestock reduction and grazing ban implementation within two years. The forage and grain subsidy amount

¹⁶⁶ AD II: 112-113.

¹⁶⁷ AD XXII: 142.

supplied by the government must correlate with the livestock reduction quota and the implementation of grazing ban. During the whole period of the supply of the *Turning Pastureland into Grassland Project* and *Ecological Resettlement Project* subsidies, every year the responsible government representative must check the livestock reduction quota and the size of pastureland exclosed from grazing in each household concerned. It must be clear too which household was approved for participation on resettlement and which was not. Each household is approved individually. The subsidy amount obtained must be certified and registered on a subsidy card by the responsible governmental representative.¹⁶⁸

The *Grazing Ban Resettlement* is designed to be combined with the *Ecological Resettlement Project* and is carried out only in areas with a total prohibition on grazing. Households that participate in the *Grazing Ban Resettlement* must reduce the livestock burden on the environment and dispose of their entire herd.¹⁶⁹ Nevertheless, according to the policy outlines, resettlement is arranged only after the fenced-off grassland is shown to be unable to restore itself after a short period of time. Exceptions to this rule should be grassland areas such as those in Zeku County, located in the province's border region, where only an exclosure of the selected pastureland with a grazing prohibition is enforced, without resettlement of the affected pastoralists.¹⁷⁰ By the year 2004, a grazing ban was already implemented on 17 million *mu* of land and 7,366 households (33,567 herders) were resettled in Qinghai Province.¹⁷¹

A further obligation of *Grazing Ban Resettlement* households, in addition to pastureland exclusion, is participation in grassland protection schemes and grassland construction efforts, which include further fencing and grass planting. During the entire length of the pastureland exclosure and grazing ban period, the pastoralists are not allowed to return back to the grassland to continue herding or other activities. An exception from this rule applies to households that live at the provincial border, such as in Henan and Zeku Counties, and also households from Xinghai, Tongde, Gonghe and Guinan. Also, in counties

¹⁶⁸ AD II: 112-113.

¹⁶⁹ AD XXII: 142.

¹⁷⁰ AD XXIII: 117.

In Zeku County, the resettlement of pastoralists is taking place under the label of *Ecological Resettlement Project*.

¹⁷¹ Yeh 2005: 23.

where a transfer of grassland use rights is allowed according to law, during the whole enclosure period it is forbidden to go back to the grassland and practice animal husbandry, etc. It is also prohibited to rent out or sell the pastureland and to sell or damage the fences financed by the government (see figure 15) and constructed for grassland protection.



Figure 15: New Turning Pastureland into Grassland Project fences constructed by the government in 2009, Maqin County, October 2009

Households involved in the *Grazing Ban Resettlement* that do in fact practice herding on the exclosed land in violation of the management regulations will be excluded from the *Turning Pastureland into Grassland Project* forage and grain subsidy distribution administered by the township government.¹⁷² In reality, in certain locations the pastoralists do let livestock graze within the grazing ban enclosures, especially if these enclosures are in remote areas where the officials only seldom check, or during bank holidays when governmental representatives will not be coming to check. On the other hand, there are also pastoralists who claim not to let the livestock in to graze, even if the grassland

¹⁷² AD XXI: 135.

conditions in their area are relatively good and partial use of the fenced-off grassland is permitted. Their reason given for such behaviour is the increased interest of the government in the wellbeing of the pastoralists and the improvement of their livelihood, as demonstrated by numerous projects implemented during the last few years. Following the rules of, for example, the *Turning Pastureland into Grassland Project* expresses an appreciation of these households.¹⁷³ The project implementation is also not consistent, varying from place to place, depending on the local officials in charge.

4.4.2. Selection of *Turning Pastureland into Grassland Project* implementation areas

The areas fenced within the *Turning Pastureland into Grassland Project* are usually chosen by the officials directly responsible for the task, and the pastoralists are required to follow the regulations. The land to be exclosed from grazing is chosen according the degradation grade of the pastureland. Following this rule, not all households would have grassland exclosure on the land contracted to them: some households would have their own part left fallow, but there also might be a group of households sharing one exclosed area. Nevertheless, there are also exceptions from this rule. At least up until the year 2007 in Hainan Prefecture, the pastoralists were free to decide individually about the size of pastureland they will allow to lie fallow (see figure 16).¹⁷⁴

In the community of Dae (Chin: 达峨, Tib: sTag mgo) in Hongyuan County, Sichuan Province, each household was told to select a certain size of the grassland to be fenced as part of the *Turning Pastureland into Grassland Project*. Local pastoralists were allowed to select the exact location by themselves, whereby they usually chose remote parts of their pastureland, mountain tops and slopes in shadow.

¹⁷³ A 50-year-old pastoralist from the Dae community, Hongyuan, Sichuan Province, interviewed in October 2009.

¹⁷⁴ A member of Guinan County Office for Nature Preservation interviewed in July 2007.



Figure 16: Individual Turning Pastureland into Grassland Project enclosures, Guinan County, May 2007

In these cases, the community leader was responsible for proving that each household had fulfilled the task and fenced off the demanded size of land. Based on the report of the community leader, the government distributed relevant compensation subsidies in the form of money or grain.¹⁷⁵

The size of pastureland enclosed by fences within the *Turning Pastureland into Grassland Project* and excluded from herding is increasing every year. In order to lower the grazing pressure, the pastoralists are pushed to reduce the number of their livestock according to the capacity of the diminishing pastureland. Through this reduction, the foundation of their livelihood is vanishing and they have to rely on government subsidies, find other sources of income or move to the urban resettlements.

¹⁷⁵ A 27-year-old pastoralist from the Dae community interviewed in October 2009.



Figure 17: Pastureland exclosed from herding, Tianzhu County, Gansu Province, May 2009

4.4.3. Long-term environmental and socioeconomic benefits of the *Turning Pastureland into Grassland Project*

Recently, large areas of grasslands have been subject to obvious deterioration, and protection of the ecosystem is necessary. The release of grazing pressure definitely allows the vegetation to restore itself and the grassland quality can improve during even a short term period. Nevertheless, this procedure might have also negative consequences for the grassland ecosystem. The elder pastoralists in particular worry about the measures of long-term grassland resting, asserting that if the land is enclosed and not regularly grazed by livestock and left fallow for several years, the entire vegetation structure will change (see figure 17). Later, such land will not be suitable for animal husbandry anymore, as a new ecosystem would have developed within the exclosures¹⁷⁶. The animal husbandry office of Hongyuan County in Sichuan Province reached the same conclusion after evaluation of the grassland

¹⁷⁶ Zhou, Zhou, Liu, Wang, Zhao, Zhou 2003: 15-22.

enclosure test results. According to this finding, the maximum period during which the land can be rested is five years. After this period, the ecosystem may have changed irreparably.¹⁷⁷ If, as outlined in the *Turning Pastureland into Grassland Project*, the grass is rested for a period of ten years, or even longer, the situation might occur that there is no suitable herding pastureland left to which the pastoralists could return from the temporarily resettlements of the *Grazing Ban Resettlement*.

Besides the clear environmental goal of the *Turning Pastureland into Grassland Project*, there are socioeconomic features as well. Furthermore, there may also be a political motivation behind the implementation of this project. As Emily Yeh puts it, the ‘underdeveloped’ pastoral peoples pose a threat to national social development¹⁷⁸ and their involvement into governmentally managed projects such as grassland protection or resettlement makes it easier for the state to exercise control over the pastoral population.

The agenda of the *Turning Pastureland into Grassland Project*, especially the *Grazing Ban Resettlement* and the outlines of the *Ecological Resettlement Project*, are remarkably similar. These two projects are usually implemented in combination with each other. According to a member of the Nationalities Cultural Committee in Qinghai Province, these two projects are actually identical: the reason for separating them under different names into the jurisdiction of two different institutions is to allow twice the budget to be requested from the Central Government. Double subsidies from the Central Government enables twice as many pastoralists to be relocated during an administration period of one year.

¹⁷⁷ Former member of the Animal Husbandry Office in Hongyuan, interviewed in October 2009.

¹⁷⁸ Yeh 2005: 24.

4.5. Nomadic Settlement Project



Figure 18: Nomadic Settlement Project construction site at Tongren Town, November 2011

The last and the most recently implemented project that includes settlement constructions (see figure 18 and 19), is the so-called *Nomadic Settlement Project*, implemented in Tibetan areas. At least in the Tibetan areas of Qinghai Province, this project might represent the culmination of all previous settlement efforts, as it concerns all remaining Tibetan pastoral households without a permanent house or with an unstable house in danger of collapse (Chin: 无房户和危房户 wu fang hu he weifang hu) - in reality, meaning houses made of earth and wood and all households that have not yet participated on any sedentarisation project. The *Nomadic Settlement Project* is based on experience collected during the implementation of earlier projects such as *Turning Pastureland into Grassland* or *Ecological Resettlement Projects*. In a way, it is also a continuation of the earlier implementation of the *Set of Four* policy, as, in addition to house building, it will help with the completion of animal shed constructions, raise grassland fences, plant grass,

establish water supply systems for livestock and people, build roads and construct solar and methane gas energy facilities. So far, there is one significant difference in comparison with the resettlement projects implemented earlier. Within the *Nomadic Settlement Project*, the centre of the everyday life of a household is not shifted away from the original focus on animal husbandry, or at least not yet. Until now, participating households continue their lives as herders and in addition obtain either a governmental grant to build a new house or a ready-made house constructed by the government. The new house, however, must remain inhabited by at least part of the family.

In addition to the conditions of the pastoralists having no existing permanent house made of modern materials and taking up permanent residency in the new house, there are further participation rules, such as no involvement in any other kind of resettlement or settlement implemented within the *Turning Pastureland into Grassland* or *Ecological Resettlement Project* policy. A household, as defined by the project participation rules, must have at least two family members and it must be at least two years since these family members split from another household unit¹⁷⁹. During the implementation of the *Ecological Resettlement Project* (and maybe other projects), household splitting was a popular method among the pastoralists to ensure the acquisition of a new house without relinquishing their pastureland and livestock. The grandparents were said to be a separate household and sent to inhabit the new house in the resettlement. In this manner, one household was able to keep their pastoralist base on the grassland and in addition obtain a house situated near the transport routes, from which the children have better access to school.¹⁸⁰ Such household splitting, is, at least officially, impossible with the *Nomadic Settlement Project*.

¹⁷⁹ AD XXV: 5-6.

¹⁸⁰ AD XXVII: 2.



Figure 19: Nomadic Settlement in Ningxiu, Zeku County, October 2009

4.5.1. The Nomadic Settlement Project in Qinghai Province

The *Nomadic Settlement Project*¹⁸¹, implemented in Qinghai Province in 2009, is managed by the provincial Agricultural and Animal Husbandry office. In Qinghai, its scope encompasses 31 counties of six prefectures, Haibei, Hainan, Huangnan, Yushu, Guoluo and Haixi. All places affected are Tibetan areas. According to a governmental investigation, in Qinghai Province there are 134,300 households that fit in the above-mentioned participation rule pattern of the *Nomadic Settlement Project*¹⁸². Not all targeted pastoralist households can be involved in the project at the same time. The *Nomadic Settlement Project* is scheduled to continue over the next years until the settlement is completed. The costs are shared by the Central Government, the provinces, prefectures and counties, and the pastoralists themselves. The number of houses built in one year depends in the first place on the annual investment of the Central Government which contributes over 50 percent of all expenses.

¹⁸¹ This project also seems to be a parallel to the *Comfortable Housing Project* in the TAR described by Goldstein. (Goldstein 2010).

¹⁸² AD XXVII: 2.

For the year 2009, the government of Qinghai Province scheduled the construction of 25,710 houses with a total investment of 1,225,872,000 RMB. In the plan of 2009, the pastoralists were supposed to provide 13.8 percent of the total costs¹⁸³. However, the pastoralists' share of the settlement construction costs is really only a statistical statement. In reality, the local governmental institution in charge decides on the implementation in the particular area under its jurisdiction, according to the financial resources supplied by the government and the number of households designated for participation in the *Nomadic Settlement Project* on-site. Depending on the implementation method on-site, the pastoralists have to pay a fixed share for any government constructed houses, or they obtain a fixed amount of financial support from the government and are responsible for the house construction by themselves. Modern materials such as bricks, concrete, metal and wood for pillars are to be used for the construction of new dwelling houses. To meet all the needs of one household (no matter how many family members it has), the size of a house must be at least 60 square meters¹⁸⁴.

The implementation of the *Nomadic Settlement Project*, similar to the implementation of the other development projects, varies from place to place. For example, in Guoluo Prefecture, in 2009 the government scheduled construction of 5,128 new houses in the pastoralist area. According to a Prefecture Government announcement, these houses were to be built by the pastoralists themselves. The construction must include a house of at least 60 square meters, a toilet, an animal shed and an animal yard. 48,500 RMB were made available to build each house unit¹⁸⁵. According to field research, in Maqin County, Guoluo Prefecture, any pastoralist household could apply to participate on this project. Even households the already possessed a permanent concrete house started the construction of a new house. Most households build their houses themselves. While it is possible to hire labourers for the construction, doing so would mean additional costs for the pastoralists. The new houses could be constructed either in the winter grassland or in a new village settlement next to the prefecture seat. Only after a house in Tibetan

¹⁸³ AD XXV: 1-2.

¹⁸⁴ AD XXV: 9.

¹⁸⁵ Public announcement of the Guoluo Prefecture Government from the 14th of September 2009.

style, interpreted as a house with a tiled front (see figure 20), of the right size and a toilet was constructed, was the owner authorized to receive the financial support of 40,000 RMB.



Figure 20: Tibetan style house according to regulation of the Nomadic Settlement Project on the winter grassland location, Maqin County, October 2009

Construction of animal sheds was contracted separately and participant households had to prepay 6,000 RMB to the government in order to obtain double the allocation later. By the end of 2009, this money still has not reached the pastoralists, despite the fact that the house constructions and the animal shed construction preparations were already completed months ago.

4.5.2. Examples of *Nomadic Settlement Project* implementation in Sichuan Province

The government also implements the *Nomadic Settlement Project* in the pastoralist area of Hongyuan County in the neighbouring province of Sichuan. The grassland conditions in Sichuan Province are much better than in Qinghai Province. Nevertheless, large-scale sedentarisation is also being implemented

here. In the year 2009, each household that applied and was chosen to participate on the *Nomadic Settlement Project* in Hongyuan County obtained 20,000 RMB to build a new house (see figure 21). The total amount spent on the constructions was usually much higher, sometimes even over 100,000 RMB.



Figure 21: House constructed within the Nomadic Settlement Project by pastoralists in Hongyuan County, October 2009

The pastoralists use their savings to equip the new house with high-quality modern goods (see figure 22) and also enjoy the possibility of a state loan that consists of a further 25,000 RMB that must be repaid during the three following years. Poorer households, labelled as such by the township and county government, get a ready-built house for free (see figure 23), together with a small governmental subsidy.



Figure 22: Inner equipment of a new house, Hongyuan County, October 2009



Figure 23: Nomadic Settlement Project house constructed by the government for poor households, Hongyuan County, October 2009

In Zeku County, inhabited mainly by pastoralists with lower incomes in comparison with the pastoralist households of Maqin County or Hongyuan, the government decided take charge of all *Nomadic Settlement Project* house constructions, which were designed to build separate villages of uniform houses (see figure 24) near roads or administrative centres. The implementation of the *Nomadic Settlement Project* in Zeku County will be described in detail in the following chapters.



Figure 24: *Nomadic Settlement in Ningxiu, Zeku County, October 2009*

4.5.3. On site in the *Nomadic Settlement*

According to the general agenda, the implementation of the *Nomadic Settlement Project* should increase the living comfort of the pastoralists, improve regional development and enable better political control in pastoral areas. The new houses in villages are promoted as a living base for each pastoralist household. The household equipment does not have to be moved throughout the year, and possession of a dwelling offers the pastoralists a chance to accumulate material belongings. The government also hopes that through moving the headquarters of pastoralist households closer to urban

areas, the engagement of the pastoralists in business and services would increase. However, only a small number of households actually try to obtain additional income as drivers, or plan to open a restaurant or accommodations for tourists or transients. The majority of the people in the settlements just use the free time to rest, and rely on the food supplies from their livestock in the grassland and financial subsidies from the government. Although household splitting has been made more difficult and moreover unnecessary within the *Nomadic Settlement Project*, the participating pastoralists find other ways to bypass the regulations and obtain the greatest benefit from this kind of state support. Households that lack children of school age, or are without other reasons to stay in an urban area, rent or sell their new houses to other people. Although the government does check if the new houses are being inhabited, they do not verify who is using them. This project is thus also being abused and modified not only to benefit the local government, but also to benefit the pastoralists themselves.

5. Zeku County– the case study area



Figure 25: Map of China with Zeku County

The selected case study area is the purely pastoral Zeku County (Chin: 泽库县 *Zeku xian*, Tib: rTse khog) in the Huangnan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture (Chin: 黄南藏族自治州 *Huangnan zangzu zizhi zhou*) of Qinghai Province (see figure 25). Statistically, it is one of the poorest counties of Qinghai Province¹⁸⁶. Zeku County was founded by the Peoples' Government of China on the 5th of December 1953, and since then has become one of the four counties of the Huangnan Prefecture. The name 'Zeku' is a Chinese phonetic transcription of the Tibetan name 'rTse khog', which means 'basin between the mountains'. The rTse khog area spreads between 34°45' and 35°32' of northern latitude and 100°34' and 102°8' of eastern longitude. The total county area covers 6658.06 km², which is 37.18 percent of the prefecture area and 0.91

¹⁸⁶ Measured by statistical annual cash income. In 2005, the per capita average income of the pastoralists in Zeku County was 1,370 RMB, which made Zeku County the second poorest county behind Dari County with 1,359 RMB of average per capita income. (Chen 2007: 2). According to the national statistics from 2008, the Tibetan areas of Qinghai Province still remain the most backward region with the lowest per capita income of the whole of China. The poorest prefectures are Yushu, Guoluo and the pastoral part of the Huangnan Prefecture with per capita annual income of 2,177 RMB, 2,291 RM and 2,369 RMB. The national average per capita income in 2008 was 4,761 RMB. (*Qinghai Daily* 24.4.2009).

percent of the total area of Qinghai Province¹⁸⁷. The average temperature of the county lies between -2.4°C and 2.8°C. The average altitude of the region is 3,500 m and the highest point of the whole Huangnan Prefecture (Zamari ridge 4931 m) also lies in Zeku County. The lowest part of Zeku County is in Maixiu (Chin: 麦秀, Tib: dMe shul) (2800 m). 98 percent (6525.30 km²) of Zeku County area is grassland (94.94 percent was labelled as usable grassland¹⁸⁸).¹⁸⁹ Because of its high altitude, Zeku's grassland quality is comparably low, when compared, for example, with the neighbouring Mongolian Autonomous County of Henan (Chin: 河南蒙古族自治县 Henan mengguzu zizhi xian; Tib: rMa lho sog rigs rang skyong khul or Yul rgan nyin) that lies at a lower altitude. Zeku County possesses neither spectacular landscapes nor economically important spots that would attract the Central Government in the first place, and therefore it is not among the regions that enjoyed modernisation and development in the first round of the development strategy. The landscape of Zeku County is mostly open grassland, without spectacular mountain ranges that would attract tourism. Only the Maixiu forest at the border with Tongren County has been considered for further tourism development by the Provincial Government. There might also be some state mining interests, especially gold mining, in this area, though the magnitude of any mining potential is not yet known. Only small areas of the county, especially in sTob ldan (Chin: 多福顿 Duofudun), offer caterpillar fungus of average quality, and so the main income of the local pastoralists is still derived from animal husbandry.

5.1. Administrative shifts over the rTse khog area in the history and the establishment of Zeku County

This section provides a brief overview concerning the major administrative shifts in the rTse khog (Zeku) area. Considering predominantly the establishment of administrative units in the rTse khog area, I decided to use the available Chinese source with the most detailed description of administrative

¹⁸⁷ Li 2005:1.

¹⁸⁸ (Chin: 可利用草场 ke liyong caochang) means grassland that is actually in use or can be used for animal husbandry, meaning that there is a suitable water source in that area.

¹⁸⁹ Li 2005: 1.

development after 1949, the *Zeku County records* published in 2005. Even though they were compiled mainly by local Tibetan authors, as with any contemporary official Chinese source, it is necessary to treat them with care. For a more detailed overview and analysis of the history of Zeku County see Benno Weiner (2012).

Zeku County has rarely attracted any research interest and so not much is known about this area except for the statistical data in Chinese records.¹⁹⁰ Like many other Tibetan communities in Eastern Tibet, lying at the border of Chinese and Tibetan cultural areas, local people have experienced many socio-political and administrative shifts and have been subjected to various cultural influences throughout history

In former times, the area of today's Zeku County used to be part of the pasture land of the Qiang (Chin: 羌) tribe. At the beginning of the fourth century, during the reign of the Western Jin dynasty¹⁹¹ in China, the Tuyuhun (Chin: 吐谷浑) tribe took over this pasture land. Through the end of the sixth and beginning of the seventh century, the Sui Dynasty defeated the Tuyuhun and the rTse khog area shifted to the jurisdiction of the Dahua County (Chin: 达化县 Dahua xian). In 663, during the reign of the Tang Dynasty¹⁹² in China and the reign of King Mangsong Mangcän (Tib: Mang srong mang btsan)¹⁹³ in Tibet, the Tibetans (Tubo tribe, Chin: 吐蕃) conquered the entire Tuyuhun region. In 866 the Tang Dynasty took over the administration of the region again. During the Southern Song Dynasty, in 1136, the area of today's Zeku County fell under Mongol administration. In 1253 the Mongols founded a Tibetan area controlled by a pacification commissar, and in 1261 the Mongolian emperor Kublai Khan founded the administrative unit of Gansu Province (Chin: 甘肃行中书省 Gansu xingzhong shusheng). Zeku County was part of a smaller administrative unit of ten thousand households, established south of the Yellow River. After the political changes of the Ming Dynasty, the

¹⁹⁰ For example, Joseph Rock mentions the rTse khog area in his book *The Amnye Ma-chen range and adjacent regions*. 1956.

¹⁹¹ Jin dynasty (晋): 265-316 A.D.

¹⁹² Tang dynasty (唐): 618-960 A.D.

¹⁹³ 650-676 A.D.

administration was taken over and adapted by the new government. The administrative areas became smaller and included only a thousand households each.

In 1636 the Western Mongols led by Gushri Khan came to Qinghai¹⁹⁴ and occupied the whole Tibetan area. In 1652, Gushri Khan's grandson settled down in the region to the south of the Yellow River. His people inhabited the area of the Mangla River, the Bashui River valley, the Shagou district and the Zequ River valley (today's Zeku County). An administrative area in the south of the Yellow River was established. In 1725, Luobuzang Danjin, the Mongolian ruler in Qinghai, initiated an armed rebellion against the Qing government of China. None of the Rebgong tribes, including the tribes that inhabited today's Zeku area, participated in this rebellion and so the Rebgong tribes were not subsequently attacked by the Qing government. In 1727, the Qing dynasty appointed Danai to become the 'Imperial commissioner to handle the affairs of the Barbarians in Mongolia and Qinghai'. He organized the twenty-eight banners of Qinghai and Mongols and set up a thousand units of a hundred families each in the area inhabited by the Tibetans. The head of Hezhou obtained the additional duty to administer the area of Baoan, which also included today's Tongren and Zeku, situated outside of the region of Hezhou. In 1762 the Qing government established the Xunhua governmental department under whose jurisdiction today's counties of Tongren and Zeku also belonged. In 1764, the districts of Xunhua and Baoan, which belonged to Hezhou, came under the jurisdiction of Xining town. The Tibetan inhabitants of Xunhua and Guide were under the administration of Xining governmental office.

During the Republican era of China, rTse khog remained under the administration of Xunhua, which became a county in 1913. In 1929 Tongren

¹⁹⁴ In Chinese sources, we can find the term Qinghai referring to the area around the Qinghai Lake. During the Qing dynasty, Chinese sources mention the position of 'minister over Qinghai affairs', whose authority should have concerned the grassland areas of today's Qinghai province (all of today's Yushu and Haixi and the grassland areas of Hainan, Haibei and Huangnan. Qinghai as an administrative area is mentioned in Chinese sources starting 1907. The administrative unit of Qinghai Province was founded in 1928. (Cui 2002: 496-499). In Appendix to Tsepon W. D. Shakabpa; *Tibet. A Political History* we can find the statement that the Eastern Tibetan area of Amdo had been integrated as Qinghai Province into China in 1724. (Shakabpa 2000: 345).

County was separated from Xunhua and since 1931 Tongren has been under direct jurisdiction of Qinghai province. Since 1932, rTse khog has formed the fourth district of Tongren County.¹⁹⁵

After the establishment of People's Republic of China (PRC), rTse khog remained a part of the Tongren County until 1953, when the government of the Tongren Tibetan autonomous district and the Consultation Committee decided to divest Zeku County from Tongren County, to which it used to belong. Zeku County was created from the fifth, the sixth and the seventh area under the Tongren jurisdiction built by ten Tibetan tribes: the Hor, Rong bo (Chin: 隆务 Longwu), Bon rgya (Chin: 王家 Wangjia), So nag (Chin: 琐乃亥 Suonaihai), mGar rtse (Chin: 瓜什则 Guashenze), dMe shul (Chin: 麦秀 Maixiu), mGon shul (Chin: 官秀 Guanxiu), dPyi sa (Chin: 西卜沙 Xibusha), Ko'u sde ka rong (Chin: 古德尕让 Gudegarang) and Khe ru'I chu rnga (Chin: 克日其那 Keriqina) tribe.

Between 1954 and 1956 Zeku County was divided into seven districts with their own administrative seats. The districts were Heri area (Chin: 和日区 Heri qu) with its administrative seat in Zhoumaoduoze tang (周毛多则塘), Suonaihai area (Chin: 琐乃亥区 Suonaihai qu) with its administrative seat in Suonaihai (琐乃亥), Duofudun area (Chin: 多福顿区 Duofudun qu) with its administrative seat in Duofudun (多福顿), Guanxiu area (Chin: 官秀区 Guanxiu qu) with its administrative seat in Duohemao (多禾茂), Sairi district (Chin: 赛日地区 Sairi diqu) with its administrative seat in Jiakuatang (加夸塘), Guashenze township (Chin: 瓜什则乡 Guashenze xiang) with its administrative seat in Guashenze (瓜什则) and Xibusha township (Chin: 西卜沙乡 Xibusha xiang) with its administrative seat in Xibusha (西卜沙).

In 1958, the entire county was divided into eleven people's communes. In July 1962, eight townships were founded: Heri (Chin: 和日乡 Heri xiang, Tib: Hor), Ningxiu (Chin: 宁秀乡 Ningxiu xiang, Tib: Nyin shul), Duofudun (Chin: 多福顿乡 Duofudun xiang, Tib: sTobs ldan), Duohemao (Chin: 多禾茂乡 Duohemao xiang, Tib: rDo dkar mo), Xiade (Chin: 夏德日乡 Xiade xiang, Tib:

¹⁹⁵ Li 2005: 7 – 13.

Bya dar), Qiake (Chin: 恰科日乡 Qiake xiang, Tib: Cha gor), Wangjia (Chin: 王稼乡 Wangjia xiang, Tib: Bon rgya) and Xibusha (Chin: 西卜沙乡 Xibusha xiang, Tib: dPyi sa) which were converted back into communes in the period from 1970 to 1983.¹⁹⁶ In 2001, Xiade Township was renamed as the town of Zeku (Chin: 泽曲镇 Zeku zhen). In 2006, Qiake Township was integrated into the administrative unit of Zeku Town and Duofudun Township was renamed as Maixiu Town (Chin: 麦秀镇 Maixiu zhen). However, until 2011 the name Duofudun Township has been in general use for this area and appears as well in the present dissertation.

5.2. Pastoralism and population structure in Zeku County

According to the *Zeku County records*, before the establishment of the Zeku County administrative unit, the area was inhabited purely by Tibetans. Currently, Zeku County, together with Henan County, forms the pastoral part of the Huangnan Prefecture. The population statistics show a total population at the time of the foundation of the Zeku County administrative unit of 16,676 people living in 4,143 households, of which 48.98 percent are men and 51.22 percent women.¹⁹⁷ Since the foundation of the local government and incorporation into the Chinese administration system in 1953, members of other nationalities have started to move into this county. The Han and other nationalities' cadres were sent to Zeku County by the Central Government to help start the wave of development and modernisation.¹⁹⁸ According to the statistics, in 1995 the total population of Zeku County was 45,845 people, corresponding to 8,295 households. Of the total population, 44,357 people (96.75 percent) were still Tibetans. The rest of the population consisted of 1,146 Han people (2.5 percent), 205 Hui Muslims (0.45 percent), 54 Salar Muslims, 54 Mongour people, 12 Mongolians, 10 Baoan people and seven members of other nationalities. Only 2,705 people from the total population had no involvement with animal husbandry. Correspondingly, the county total

¹⁹⁶ Li 2005: 52 – 65.

¹⁹⁷ Li 2005: 471. The male and female percentage proportions mentioned in this book form a total of over 100 percent. In this case, and as a general principle, the Chinese statistical data are to be taken more as orientation figures, than exact information.

¹⁹⁸ See Appendix 1. Migration and Population Dynamics in Zeku County.

agricultural value of output of 45,316,600 RMB was composed of 18.63 percent from farming, 0.36 percent from forestry, 86.62 percent from animal husbandry and only 2.25 percent from other occupations, figures revealing that the supply and demand for other services in Zeku County is rather limited. Even at the present time, the situation has not changed significantly. Nonetheless, the massive sedentarisation measures have brought more people formerly engaged into animal husbandry into urban areas, where they should find new occupations. In pastoral areas like Zeku County, there are simply not enough available employment opportunities to cover the extremely increased job demand, even after the relocation of Tibetan pastoralists into urban centres has been accomplished.

In 1995, the population density in Zeku County was 6.59 people per square kilometre. The highest population growth rate in this statistic was an increase of 90.29‰ in 1964, after which the population growth rate started to decline. Since the 1990s, the population growth rate has remained stagnant at around 17.21‰. The reason for the constant population growth was the relatively large original population and the relaxed implementation of family planning¹⁹⁹ on the part of the local administration unit. According to the data in the *Zeku County records*, as a result of the high population growth rate, the population in Zeku County grew faster than the economy, thus leading to a growing discrepancy between the number of livestock and the availability of grazing pastures. The statistics of livestock number growth in Zeku County²⁰⁰ show that between 1954 and 1995, the number of livestock almost doubled, not only through the population growth of the pastoralists, but also supported by the government.²⁰¹ According to my pastoral informants from Zeku County, during the last twenty years the number of households increased by about 30 percent and accordingly the size of each household pastureland shrank.²⁰² This process led to an unwinnable situation: in some parts of Zeku County, where the pastoralists tried to respect the local grassland capacity, even where the population increased the number of livestock decreased, because the

¹⁹⁹ See the chapter 'Family planning' in Li 2005: 480 – 481.

²⁰⁰ See Appendix 2. Livestock statistics in Zeku County from 1954 to 1995.

²⁰¹ *Mtsho sngon bod yig gsar 'gyur*. 05.10.1994.

²⁰² A 60-year-old pastoral community leader from Wangjia Township, Zeku County, interviewed in May 2007.

pastureland became smaller leading to an income shortage for such households. In the cases where the number of livestock increased according to the needs of a household, overgrazing was inevitable. To solve this situation, to stop the overgrazing and degradation process and to empower the regeneration of the ecosystem, and to help pastoralist households with insufficient income, the government planned to resettle around 50 percent of the local pastoralists.

5.2.1. Current pastoral patterns and grassland management in Zeku County

Recent records of the population of Zeku County show 62,044 people, with 97.98 percent of population composed of Tibetans. According to the statistics, approximately 56,361 inhabitants (90.84 percent of the county population) are still involved in animal husbandry²⁰³, which remains the major source of income for the local population. The pastoralists of rTse khog alternate their residence between the winter and the summer pastures. At the winter pasture each family has usually a solid house, with the majority built from soil, the main construction material found in the farming regions of Qinghai as well. Only since 2005 have some households started to use new industrial materials, specifically concrete and bricks to build the house structure and tiles to decorate the facades. The winter pastures are fenced and the grassland is divided by long stripes of wire netting. These fences are intended to mark the boundaries of the pastureland allocated to each household following the dissolution of communes in Zeku County in 1983. During the decollectivisation process, the land use rights and livestock were allocated to the pastoralists according to the number of family members in each household. In 1996, redistribution of local land among the households took place and each person obtained about 100 *mu* of grassland.²⁰⁴ Afterwards, the government ordered the enclosure of the land of each household by wire fences, in order to avoid quarrels over land²⁰⁵ and also to stop animals from grazing on a

²⁰³ AD XXX: 1.

²⁰⁴ The first land distribution with land use contracted to individual households took part already in 1984. (Li 2005: 39).

²⁰⁵ See also Yeh, who found that after the fences were raised, the quarrels over land among pastoralists increased. (Yeh 2003 (I): 500).

neighbour's pasture. The costs for rising of the fences had to be covered by the pastoralists themselves. Since communally organized use of the pastureland no longer exists in the winter grazing areas, to avoid either overgrazing or a reduction in livestock, wealthier households are forced to rent pastures or buy additional grass from others. Poorer families clearly profited from the land redistribution in having kept the land use rights, even if they possess only few livestock or none, as through exercising their ownership rights, they can obtain additional income by renting out their pastures. The fencing of pastureland eased the work of the herders, but at the same time the fences limit herding flexibility and access to water. They also bring new responsibilities and financial burden for the pastoralists, who have to build them, maintain them in good condition and potentially repair the fences at their own cost.²⁰⁶ According to my observations, the free time gained through the fencing measure is in most cases not used as an opportunity to start new activities or business. The older generation use the time to rest at home or worry about the younger generation, which in turn prefer to visit towns to spend the day enjoying leisure activities like playing pool or drinking alcohol. By the end of 1995 already 88,700 hectares (about 14 percent) of the grassland have been fenced in Zeku County. Fencing is still part of the governmental development projects in Qinghai Province. According to the Qinghai Province Grassland Station, depending on the annual budget supplied by the Central Government, the Provincial Government provides currently up to 40 percent of the fencing material costs, while the rest of the costs for material and labour have to be paid by the pastoralists themselves.

Besides fences marking the boundaries of land between each household, other kinds of enclosures can be identified as having had an influence on local grassland management. In the 1970s, following the example of Inner Mongolia and their fencing experiences, the government ordered the enclosure of separate grass-reservoirs²⁰⁷ on the grassland, with fences installed to protect places of degraded pastureland so that the grass could regenerate. Additionally, the fenced areas served also as reserve grassland in times of natural

²⁰⁶ Banks 2003: 2137-2139.

²⁰⁷ Chinese: 草库伦 (cao kulun); comes from a Mongolian word that means 'surrounded land'. Parts of land are fenced by three wigs, grass, wooden pillars, earth walls or iron wires. Such fenced land is used for protection of degenerated grass, to grow grass or to graze animals.

catastrophes and for new-born animals. The original aim of this process was to seek the proportion 'one animal to one *mu* of grassland' and Zeku County was intended to serve as an example for the province as a whole. During the ten years of implementation of this strategy, 340 such grass reservoirs were created in the entire county. The walls of the enclosures were built from sod bricks. The total enclosed area measured 82,000 hectares and the surrounding walls were 123.4 km long in total. According to the livestock statistics at that time, a quota of one animal per 1.16 *mu* of land was achieved, which exceeded the original aim of the fencing project. Similar sod walls have also been used in Zeku County to enclose fields. During the period of people's communes, large crop fields were established in pastoral areas, though this attempt to raise crops often remained without success due to the high altitude and unfavourable climate. In Zeku County however, for example in Wangjia and Heri Townships, some fields remain intact, farmed by local pastoral communities who plant rapeseed. The current sedentarisation policy further encourages this local agriculture through equipping each Wangjia community that moves to a new village with a new tractor and other farming machinery.

However, the extensive use of sod bricks to create all these walls has resulted in large parts of the grassland being destroyed. In the affected areas, the removal of turf formed earth banks, which became welcome living space for the pikas and which collapse easily due to subsequent erosion. To mitigate this erosion caused by digging sod bricks, iron wire netting has been in use as a fencing material since 1981. Additionally, the inflexibility of divided and fenced pastureland might have also contributed to the problem of overgrazing, in instances where too many animals are kept on insufficient pasture.²⁰⁸ In support of the environmental protection, further fencing is used to exclude animals from the degraded parts of grassland and further restrict the grazing activity. Excluding the use of grazing land leads to an increase in grazing pressure, and to release this, and to enable the pastoralist households to find alternative sources of income, recent governmental policy attempts to settle the Tibetan pastoralists in newly constructed villages close to urban areas. Zeku County is no exception to this measure.

²⁰⁸ See also: Singh 2009: 65-68.

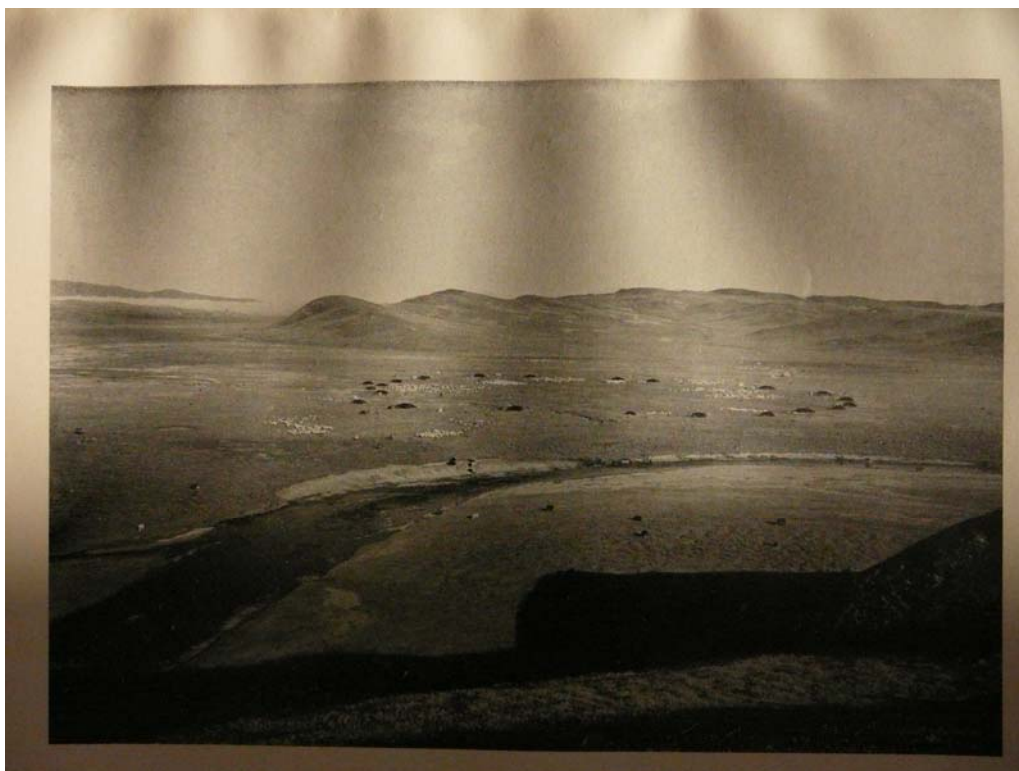
The summer pastures in Zeku County, which are usually up in the mountains, are not fenced. These places remain the same as in the past and each family has a set piece of grassland to which it moves every summer. Depending on the weather conditions, the families usually move to the summer pastures in early June and leave them again at the end of August. The location of the summer pastures varies considerably. Some households have their summer pasture only several hundred meters from the winter pasture, just on the other side of the road, but even then they raise their tent over the summer and move into the tent instead of staying in the nearby house. Other households move up to fifty kilometres away. Recently, the normal method of relocating has become putting the belongings on a pickup truck instead of on yaks and travelling on motorbikes instead on horses. Some households still use traditional black tents, made of yak hair in the summer pastures of Zeku County, but more often white cotton tents can be observed, sometimes of traditional shape combined with black stripes of yak wool, or modern white tents in the shape of army tents with metal frames.

In the lower part of the county, in Duofudun Township, some households use an additional spring/autumn pasture, which lies on the route between the winter and summer camp and where they spend about a month both on the way to the summer pasture and on the way back. These pastures are also not fenced.

5.3. Urban areas of Zeku County

The main urban centre is the county town of Zeku, situated in the geographical centre of the county. After it was decided to establish the county jurisdiction in 1953, the government started to construct buildings, roads and water canals. Before that, the Zeku River valley, where today's county town is situated, was merely a part of the waste grassland of rTse khog (see figure 27). In 1974, there was already a visible urban area of the county town, connected with roads to Tongren and Henan and surrounded by camps and settlements of the pastoralists²⁰⁹. This valley is now getting covered by various settlement houses growing at the outskirts of the county seat (see figure 28).

²⁰⁹ According to a map constructed by the Soviet army for the general staff. *China, Provinces Qinghai and Gansu*, sheet Zeku, I-47-XII, edition 1976.



*Figure 27: Area of today's Zeku County Seat in 1955*²¹⁰



Figure 28: Outskirts of growing Zeku County seat. Houses built within the Nomadic Settlement Project spread over the Zeku river valley, 2011.

²¹⁰ Rock 1956: plate 27.

The development of local infrastructure continued. By 1989, thirty-five electric wire lines were laid from Tongren to Zeku. Administration buildings, schools, a hospital and also a market and business centre were constructed. As a purely pastoral county, Zeku did not produce enough income and cash to pay for the new government and public facilities. The government started to collect taxes in 1954, but heavy subsidies from the Central Government were still necessary to finance the new infrastructure development. In 1954 the collected taxes amounted to only 27.79 percent of the total county income of 511,000 RMB, while even by 1995 the government subsidies still made up 19.74 percent of the total annual county income of 13,907,000 RMB²¹¹. After the beginning of *Great Opening of the West* development strategy, the investment from the Central Government to build up the infrastructure in Zeku County was increased further.



Figure 29: Zeku County town, 2007

In 2005, during my first visit to Zeku County, the county town (see figure 29) consisted of two streets with Chinese and Tibetan hospitals, one middle school,

²¹¹ Li 2005: 245.

two primary schools, a children's nursery, a bank, post office, television station, governmental building complex, an army quarter, several stores and motorcycle repair services, a petrol station, a pharmacy, meat and vegetable market, one abandoned cinema, a small police station, a grouping of houses for government workers, a sacred hill site, a solitary hotel with a disco and a prison that has been rebuilt and enlarged since the start of the *Great Opening of the West* development strategy.

Besides the county town, the only urban spots of the county were small centres with one administration building in each township. Located along the main roads, these places usually consisted of a few houses, small restaurants and a school. The rest of the county area was grassland, where the only buildings were the pastoralist's winter houses and small village primary school yards, often even without suitable road access. There were more than fifty primary schools in the whole county²¹², with one situated in almost each village (see figure 30).



Figure 30: Grassland community school in Zeku County, 2007

²¹² AD XXXI: 3.

Since the year 2007, throughout China, the nine years of school attendance are enforced by law²¹³, a practice that applies no less strictly to pastoral areas like Zeku County. As in the majority of pastoralist areas of the Qinghai-Tibetan Plateau, also in Zeku County, from the first year onwards the children board at the school for the whole semester, only returning home during the winter and summer holiday. Lack of communications and long distances from home to school make it impossible for the children to return home every day, thus implying more work for pastoralist families who are thus deprived of additional caretakers for the animals, and increased responsibility for the teachers, who live in the school together with the students. The conditions in the schools are often very bad, as the financial supply from the government is not enough to reach a suitable standard in the classrooms and dormitories (see figure 31). Usually, there is not enough space in the dormitories for all the children, so in most cases several children have to share one bed. In turn, the teachers lack individual rooms and share with other teachers or even with students, hence it is common for teachers with better qualifications to try to gain employment in the urban areas, where the living standard is a little higher. Usually the teachers, who grew up in the pastoral area, have returned to their home village to work there. The teacher selection process is very simple. Applicants with bachelor degree qualifications or dazhuan study qualifications can participate in government exams for a certain prefecture or county, and in the event that they pass the government exams, they will be employed as teachers. Specific teacher training is not required and these young teachers can teach any subject. Under these circumstances, the quality of the education in primary schools in remote Tibetan areas is very often lacking²¹⁴. In Zeku County, all the schools are Tibetan schools. The teachers use the Tibetan language to teach the students, and the children start with Tibetan and Chinese language lessons in the first grade, with English added in the third grade.

²¹³ Obligatory school attendance was already introduced in 1999. Nevertheless, especially in countryside areas the school attendance was not controlled very strictly. In 2007, the government decided to fight hard against the relatively high illiteracy rates in the countryside. From that year on, all school-aged children must attend school. They were divided into grades according to their age, regardless of if they have had previous school knowledge or not. (Government social worker from Yushu Prefecture, interviewed in September 2009). See also Lin, Liu 2011: 12-13.

²¹⁴ See also: Rui, Mei 2009.

Even if school attendance is obligatory in China and the primary school education in Zeku County is free for the children from pastoralist households, in remote rural areas many parents still do not send all their children to school. Sometimes the reason is the distance from home to school, sometimes, the children are needed at home to help with the housework. According to local school leaders in the Zeku County, in reality only about 2/3 of the children attend school regularly, but even then the school records the numbers of all the children of school age in their statistics, irrespective of whether they actually attend, and this figure is the amount reported to the higher authorities.²¹⁵



Figure 31: Class in grassland community school in Zeku County, 2007

The main reason for this practice is to obtain the full grant from the government, as the amount of money the school receives depends on the number of students they have. In the case of a supervisory visit from the prefecture or provincial education bureau, the school head teacher, who knows of the visit in advance, arranges for students from other schools to attend their

²¹⁵ According to the report of the local government, in 2006 9,790 children reached the school attending age. From among them, 95.83 percent started to attend the first class. (AD XXVIII: 6).

school to complete the required number. As a consequence, when the delegates ask the children how they like the school, they sometimes answer that they are not sure yet, as this is the first day at the school for them.

During the implementation of the *Great Opening of the West* development strategy, the government has also invested in education and improvement of the standard of schooling facilities. From 2007 to 2009, the government started to rebuild and enlarge some of the school buildings in the county seat and township centres. The primary schools in the grassland areas have to wait for reconstruction or rely on support from nongovernmental organizations.

The current stricter control of children's school attendance and the hope for finding better-quality education in urban areas are shown to be important goals in the sedentarisation decision making process. Due to the increasing pressure to succeed in the changing Chinese society, parents in pastoral areas are often ready to choose a sedentary life in an urban environment to enable their children to have better education chances, even if it means some loss of Tibetan traditions and habits. The majority of my interviewees involved in sedentarisation projects declare easy school access as an important fact in favour of relocation. In 2011, the government ordered the closure of the primary schools in the pastoral communities on the grassland in Zeku County, a measure that has further increased the pressure on the pastoralists with children to settle in an urban area.

Before the year 2007, in Zeku County only the first stage of the development programme was being implemented. In contrast to the provincial seat and areas with high tourism potential, which were quickly changing under the modernisation projects, in the remote grassland areas the development process was inaugurated only slowly. The first development phase included construction of communications networks that connected all urban centres with governmental seats. A new road was built to the prefecture capital, from where it is easy to reach Xining, the capital of Qinghai Province. The electricity network was being extended across the grassland. Nevertheless, small communities without their own local government office, or schools situated at a distance from the main communications lines, remained difficult to reach without a suitable road and remained without electricity. Up to this point, the

life of the rTse khog population remained unchanged during this phase and the only signs reminding them of the massive development movement were the omnipresent placards along the streets of the county town and roads in the grassland that carried encouraging slogans and assured those who could read Tibetan or Chinese that a new era of fast development and prosperity for everybody had arrived in the west of China. Official slogans for progress and development posted on banners and boards (see figure 32) promised to bring modernisation, reminded the population to protect grass and plant trees or to follow the rules of the family planning policy, as this was the quickest way to become wealthy. And yet, no matter how impressive these inscriptions sounded, local people either did not understand them or did not care about them.



Figure 32: 'Xibu da kaifa Zeku da fazhan' (Great Opening of the West means Great Development for Zeku), Zeku County town, 2007

The common inhabitants of the Zeku County could not imagine anything under the term *Great Opening of the West* when asked to explain the issue, and the actual meaning of this huge strategy remained unclear to most of them, at least until the year 2007. During this year, the real major changes that affected the life on the grassland became visible in Zeku County in the form of new

resettlements built preferably next to administrative centres or along the roads. As a result, these newly created villages became the most significant aspect, from the point of view of Tibetan pastoralists, in the context of the *Great Opening of the West* development strategy that directly influenced their daily life and livelihood.

6. Implementation of resettlement and settlement projects in the case study area of Zeku County

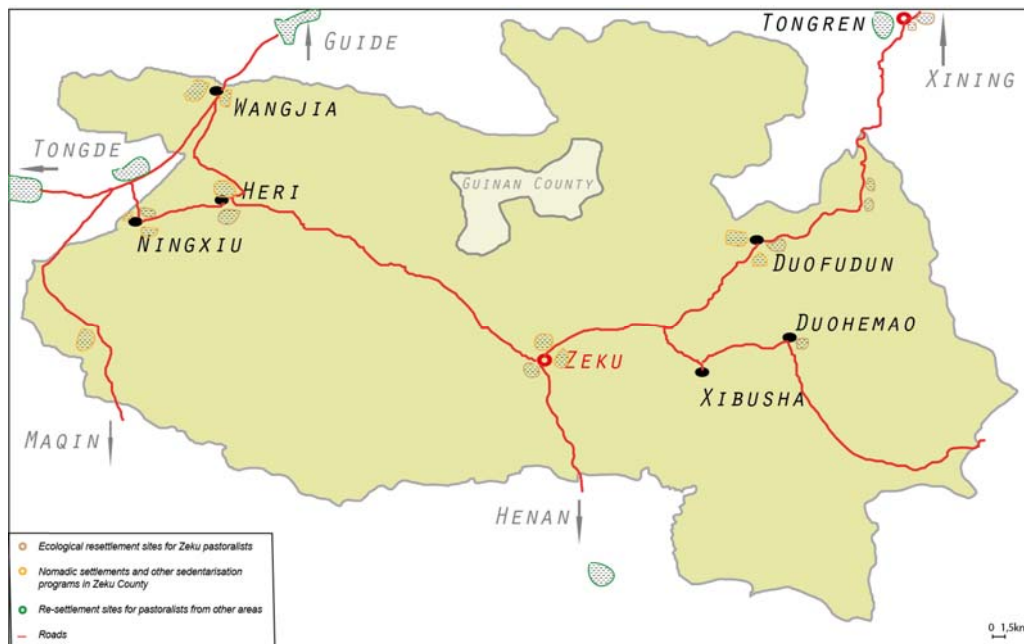


Figure 33: Orientation map of resettlement and settlement sites in Zeku County, visited by 2011

After the extension of the infrastructure, the second phase of the *Great Opening of the West* development strategy brought significant changes into the lives of Tibetan pastoralists. The implementation of socioeconomic and environmental projects caused introduction of new grassland management rules and influenced the pastoral household economies, which became visible predominantly in the accelerating shift of the pastoral living base into the urban environment represented through the various sedentarisation methods. In Zeku County, the construction works were slightly delayed in comparison with some other parts of the Qinghai Province²¹⁶ and only during the year 2007 did these

²¹⁶ In Qinghai, the resettlement process started to be tested in Yushu Prefecture. An experimental resettlement village in Laxu, close to the prefecture town, was built and inhabited approximately during the year 2002/2003. In order to lessen the grazing pressure, the pastoralists involved had to sell their livestock and fence parts of grassland for the *Turning Pastureland into Grassland Project*. As compensation, the pastoralists obtained a house in the resettlement and an annual subsidy from the government. Nevertheless, after a short period of time many pastoralists returned back to the grassland, disliking the living conditions in the new resettlement. Only a number of young people who preferred to live near the prefecture town and children who have to attend school stayed. For this reason, the project was labelled as unsuccessful and the local government launched new resettlement plans. The major aim remained the relocation of pastoralists from the grassland into resettlement sites, now being

new urban concentrations begin to grow massively on the rTse khog grassland (see figure 33). These new villages are being constructed every year and according to current policy plans, gradually all remaining pastoralists in Zeku County should become involved with sedentarisation measures during the following years.

6.1. The first wave of sedentarisation

The first wave of sedentarisation in Zeku County was scheduled for the period between 2003 and 2006. As a response to the degradation of local grassland and diminution of grassland vegetation, the government ordered a reduction of livestock and people inhabiting grassland areas²¹⁷. The justification for this measure is that the pastoralists who remain on the grassland will have much more space to graze their animals, and will consequently prosper and become richer. In addition, the resettled pastoralists will benefit from new houses and governmental support. Some households therefore have to give up their livestock completely and move to a resettlement site²¹⁸. For the first resettlement wave, the *Implementation report of the SNNR relocation project in Zeku County in the period between 2003 and 2006* presents a relocation plan for 1,093 households (4,985 people) to nine different resettlement sites. The sites selected for resettlement are:

- Laka site in Tongren county (Chin: 同仁拉卡 Tongren laka)
- The CP school in Tongren town (Chin: 同仁党校 Tongren dangxiao)
- Zeku County town (Chin: 县城 xiancheng)
- Longzang village in Duofudun Township (Chin: 龙藏 Longzang)

designated with different terminology, for example ‘new villages’ (Chin: 新村 xincun). The fast changes of implementation measures and project names caused chaos in the implementation of sedentarisation measures. So far, in Yushu prefecture in each county a resettlement site should be constructed, but it is unclear if the new houses will be inhabited by pastoralists or remain empty in the future. A Tibetan member of an NGO engaged in environmental protection in Qinghai Province and several pastoralists inhabiting the Laxu resettlement site, interviewed in July 2007.

²¹⁷ Chin: 以科学定畜 yikexue ding xu; 以科学定人 yi kexue ding ren.

²¹⁸ These households shall obtain governmental subsidies in the resettlements. According to the governmental concept, after a period of 10 years, they could return back to the grassland and keep a stipulated amount of livestock.

- Duolong village in Duofudun Township (Chin: 多龙 Duolong)
- Duofudun Township administrative centre (Chin: 多福吨乡政府 Duofudun xiang zhengfu)
- Duohemao Township administrative centre, (Chin: 多和茂乡政府 Duohemao xiang zhengfu)
- Ningxiu Township administrative centre (Chin: 宁秀乡政府 Ningxiu xiang zhengfu)
- Heri Township administrative centre (Chin: 和日乡政府 Heri xiang zhengfu)

The numbers of households to be resettled is decided according to the level of degradation and the current grassland capacity in each area²¹⁹. The exact numbers of households to be resettled during a specified period of time at a given location that appear in the governmental resettlement plans should correlate with the grassland capacity research and set the resettlement quota for each region. For Zeku County, the resettlement quota in 2003 was 128 households (676 people) from Ningxiu Zhigeri (Chin: 智格日) village, resettling to the Ningxiu Township administrative centre. The total investment costs were scheduled at 3,870,000 RMB²²⁰. Each household should have obtained a house of 60 square meters, a 100-square-meter double-use insulated shed²²¹, five *mu* of land to plant forage, and a toilet. In 2004, in total 200 households (750 people) were scheduled to resettle to Heri administrative centre, Ningxiu administrative centre and Duolong village in Duofudun Township; from Heri village (100 households), Ningxiu village (70 households)

²¹⁹ The grassland capacity can usually carry 8-15 sheep units per 1 *mu*. A Tibetan member of Nationalities Cultural Committee of Qinghai Province, interviewed in July 2008.

²²⁰ The government paid 3,000,000 RMB, 670,000 RMB were paid by the involved people themselves and 200,000 RMB were paid by local modernisation funds and other sources. Finally, this resettlement started to be constructed in June 2004 and was inhabited in October 2005. AD XXXIII.

²²¹ The double-use insulated shed was designed to be used in summer as a greenhouse to plant vegetables, for example radish, onions, etc. According to the calculations each insulated sheds can help to increase house income by up to 120 RMB. In winter these sheds can house 200 domestic animals, increase the life expectance of livestock by 3 percent, which increases the value of output through 720 RMB. The animals will lose less weight, approximately 1,5 kilo per individual. With the price at 24 RMB per kilogram, this figure means an additional income of 7,200 RMB. (AD XI: 4).

and Duofudun Duolong village (30 households). In 2004, the total scheduled investment amounted to 8,360,000 RMB²²². In 2005, an additional 665 households (3,109 people) from Zeku County were assigned for relocation, a number that included 441 households from Duofudun Township and 224 households from Duohemao Township. 125 households should resettle to Laka site and 162 households to the Communist Party (CP) school site in Tongren County. 51 households were assigned for resettlement at Zeku County town, 47 households for Duolong village, 71 households for Longzang village, 69 households for resettlement at Duofudun administrative centre and 176 households for Duohemao administrative centre. During this period, the resettlement of 433 households (2,018 people) took place within the implementation of *Ecological Resettlement Project*, introduced in Zeku County in 2005. 232 households of Zeku County (1,091 people) should be resettled within the parallel *Turning Pastureland into Grassland* resettlement project. The total scheduled investment for both projects amounted to 31,220,000 RMB²²³.

In 2006, a further 100 households (450 people) from Xibusha Township and Ningxiu village should be resettled to Laka in Tongren County and Ningxiu administrative centre. The new houses provided to selected households should have an area of 60 square meters, and should be built in rows. Some of them should also be equipped with a greenhouse, a small piece of land to grow fodder grass and a toilet.²²⁴ The total scheduled investment for the year 2006 was 5,530,000 RMB.²²⁵

Despite the original plan, the *Protocol of the annual meeting of the Zeku County government* from 2006 says that during the period between 2003 and

²²² The government paid 6,200,000 RMB and the people themselves should pay 2,160,000 RMB, but finally the total amount paid by the pastoralists amounted only to 1,200,000 RMB (in average 6,000 RMB per household). The construction of 200 houses of 60 square meters in area started in June 2005. Finally in July 2006, 168 houses and double-function greenhouses were completed and the pastoralists started to move in. (AD XXXIII and also in AD XXXV).

²²³ The government investment accounted for 23,426,000 RMB, the investment of the people involved was scheduled for 7,794,000 RMB, but finally amounted only up to 6,369,000 RMB (30,000 RMB for an apartment in multi-storey house per household; 3,000 RMB per household for a bungalow). (AD XXXIII).

Construction started in May 2007 and was completed in September 2008. (AD XXXV).

²²⁴ AD XXXIII.

²²⁵ The government paid 3,530,000 RMB, the investment of involved households was scheduled to 1,800,000 RMB, but finally amounted only up to 300,000 RMB (3,000RMB per household). (AD XXXIII).

Construction started in May 2007 and finished in September 2008. (AD XXXV).

2006, in Huangnan Prefecture including Zeku County only 400²²⁶ households were actually relocated according to the above-mentioned schedule.²²⁷ The successful relocation during this first sedentarisation period concerns the resettlement sites in Ningxiu and Heri Townships, which were partly finished by the end of 2005 and 2006. Construction work on the remainder of the scheduled resettlement sites was not started before May 2007.²²⁸ Among other circumstances, the reason for the delay included management problems of the new Sanjiangyuan office, which was established to supervise the resettlement. The selected members of the Sanjiangyuan office only alternated in this position, at the same time as holding their other employment duties. Lack of a steady personnel responsible for the resettlement implementation and construction work caused organisatory troubles and finally delays. In addition, the assigned construction company, originally from Gansu Province, was not able to fulfil the contract and was later replaced by another company from Qinghai. The price for the building plot for resettlements in Tongren area also became significantly higher than estimated and the available budget could not cover all expenses; as a result, the designed facilities dedicated to complement each resettlement site could not be finished in accordance with the schedule.²²⁹ According to the original plan, the government support for house construction for the pastoralists was estimated to be 30,000 RMB per house in resettlements within the county and 35,000 RMB per house in resettlements outside the county.²³⁰ Each household should have paid an additional 18,000 RMB to be allowed to participate in the house construction. Nevertheless, the pastoralist households in Zeku County are comparably poor and those households which take part in the relocation procedure are amongst the poorest, often without any livestock. For this reason, it was decided that in Zeku County the resettlement construction costs contributed by the pastoralists will only be 3,000 RMB per household²³¹, which of course caused further financial shortages within the governmental construction plan. In addition to receiving a new house, the resettled households in Zeku County should also obtain a grain and fodder

²²⁶ 328 households in Zhigeri village in Ningxiu. (AD XI:4).

²²⁷ *Protocol of the annual meeting of the Zeku County government* from 2006.

²²⁸ AD XXXIII.

²²⁹ AD XXXII.

²³⁰ AD XXVI.

²³¹ AD XXXIII.

subsidy of 3,000 RMB plus an additional 500 RMB for fuel annually over a period of ten years. Households who moved into a resettlement between 2005 and 2006 also received a one-time payment of 5,000 RMB to establish a new income base in the new location.²³²

The government also started to make plans for future economic conditions for income supplement in the resettlement areas. The pastoralists resettled to the Laka site should concentrate on farming, while those in the CP school resettlement should secure income from collecting caterpillar fungus and trade. In Longzang village, the exquisite natural landscape of the Maixiu forest and the rich religious heritage should be used for development of tourism in this area. The Duolong village was planned to be called the ‘Home of Caterpillar Fungus’ or the ‘Basin of the High Plateau’ and used as a tourist attraction.²³³

In addition to the livestock reduction and resettlement, a rotatory grazing policy from the *Turning Pastureland into Grassland Project, Ecological Resettlement Project* and resettlement community projects (Chin: 移民社区配套 yimin shequ peitao), etc. was introduced during the 11th Five Years Plan. The pastoralists are then allowed to use only half of their pasture, while leaving the other half fallow. For grassland where the vegetation roots were still existent, the land had to remain unused for at least six months to one year. In places where the roots were already damaged, the land must remain fallow for three years. The grassland protection measures, together with livestock reduction and the subsequent resettlement, was financed through the Sanjiangyuan environmental policy programmes.²³⁴ In Huangnan Prefecture, 393,400 *mu* of grassland was reserved for seasonal herding and the total livestock number was reduced by 24,619 sheep. 274 households inhabit so-called combined ecological settlements (Chin: 聚居半舍饲生态建设 juju ban shesi shengtai jianshe). The total investment for this measure was 28,241,500 RMB.²³⁵

²³² AD XXVI.

²³³ *Protocol of the annual meeting of the Zeku County government* from 2006.

²³⁴ A Tibetan member of the Zeku County government, interviewed in May 2007.

²³⁵ AD IX: 2.

6.1.1. The example of resettlement for pastoralists from rMa stod



Figure 34: Construction plan of the resettlement site for rMa stod pastoralists in Tongde County, May 2007

In 2006, the pastoralists of Zeku County could collect additional resettlement experience at a new site, constructed at the border of Zeku and Tongde Counties. Built under the policy of *Ecological Resettlement Project*, this site was reserved for habitation by 735 pastoralists (189 households) from Maduo County (Chin: 玛多 Maduo; Tib: rMa stod) in Guoluo Prefecture (see figure 34), and its planning and construction caused several incidents with local inhabitants of Zeku and Tongde that ensured that the project implementation was blocked at the beginning²³⁶.

The grassland of rMa stod is relatively severely degraded, and snowstorms killed many animals during the last years. Locally affected pastoralists had little choice but to look for new living possibilities elsewhere.²³⁷ This resettlement site consists of bungalows with a small courtyard and a row of two-storey houses with a business unit in the ground floor and a dwelling unit

²³⁶ Richardson 2007: 65.

²³⁷ Du 2009.

on the first floor, situated along the main road. This site has its own school and a few other communal facilities, for example an activity room for young cadres. The main reason for moving here was the loss of livestock or poor living conditions in the grasslands in rMa stod. None of the rich households with enough livestock took part on the resettlement project. Due to the high level of grassland degradation in Maduo County, the government also decided to relocate most of the pastoralists to release the pressure on the grassland. The task of the local government responsible was to persuade a targeted number of pastoralists to leave.

However, the living conditions in the resettlement do not seem to have improved the living standards of the pastoralists in any significant way so far. They have courtyards to plant vegetables, but not the necessary skills to conduct more intensive farming. Due to the high altitude, the vegetables remain small even if planted and tended correctly. In any case, the vegetables definitely cannot cover the demand for food of a household.

The business units situated along the main road are intended to enable several households to open shops, restaurants or other services for passing travellers. However, because of a lack of experience and required knowledge on the part of the pastoralists from rMa stod, most of these units are run by local people from Zeku County, who come from nearby Wangjia or Heri Township centres. The relocated rMa stod pastoralists received the house for free and additionally obtained an annual subsidy of 8,000 RMB per household²³⁸. The most radical change they have to adapt to is that suddenly everything, including food, must be bought, as without livestock there is no way to produce anything. The governmental subsidy is not enough to cover the daily expenses. To be able to cover all necessary costs, the majority of the pastoralists rely on annual earnings from collection of caterpillar fungus. Most people prefer to go harvesting caterpillar fungus for one month per year instead of taking on a low-salary job on a state construction site. Another point that causes discontentment is restrictions on religious practice in the resettlement. For example, there is no space to practice the traditional Tibetan sky burial; as a result, the dead must be cremated and the funeral cannot be completed according to Tibetan tradition.

²³⁸ A 65-year-old pastoralist from rMa stod from the resettlement site in Tongde, interviewed in June 2008.

The tradition also includes at least seven monks reading sutras for 49 days, but the monasteries are too far away from the resettlement sites and the monks are not willing to travel long distances to conduct the rituals.²³⁹ The 67 year old Lobsang, a herder relocated to the resettlement site for rMa stod pastoralists, described the situation after resettling as follows:

„Why did I come here? In rMa stod the pastures are getting worse and worse, there are many pikas... They told us that the grass must rest for twelve or eight years, then we could return.

When we came here, we sold all our animals for a very low price. If I would want to buy new livestock now, it would be really expensive.

Here we do not have any pastures, just some families have a few goats...

The people who could work, find no job. The only possibility is to collect caterpillar fungus or to go to other places to find work there.

We must buy everything, all the food. Therefore we must earn money, but there is nothing to do here, no work. We have no experience with such life and work....

There is school here. In rMa stod it was not easy to visit school and it was expensive. If we move here, it should be easier for the children to attend school. They told us it will be good and advantageous for us to move, but it is not really good here.

...

The good thing here is the easy connection to communications. It is easier to travel, to visit a doctor.²⁴⁰

Pastoralists who resettled to this spot own no more livestock and they have (temporarily) transferred the use rights of their pastureland back to the government. After ten years spent in the resettlement, these pastoralists can apply to return to their original grassland. The young people who are too old to attend school are unemployed and spend the days drifting around. Tashi, a 25-year-old informant, said that he would prefer to return to the grassland

²³⁹ A 30-year-old former pastoralist from mGo log, interviewed in September 2008.

²⁴⁰ Lobsang, a resettled pastoralist from rMa stod in Tongde resettlement, age 67, interviewed in June 2008.

immediately, where he could herd animals rather than spend his life doing nothing. Unfortunately, the contract does not allow the households to go back and use the grassland they used to live on before the contract expires.

”The grass in rMa stod was bad and not enough to feed all animals. Then the snowstorm came and many animals died. That is why we came here. I cannot say if I like it here or not. I prefer the grassland in rMa stod. Here I have nothing to do. For those things that are possible to do here I do not have the required skills. That is the reason why I prefer my own pastures...

If I could, I would return...

We cannot go back and continue the life as pastoralists. Once we come here, the government does not allow us to return. Only after the government would consider it to be a good idea, we can return to the mountains and be pastoralists again, otherwise not.“²⁴¹

Between the years 2003 and 2006, the majority of pastoralists of Zeku County considered the resettlement to be something they might have heard of, but something that did not affect or concern them directly. The rMa stod resettlement site on the Zeku border simply became a welcome spot for young pastoralists from the rTse khog grassland to spend their days enjoying themselves.

6.2. The sedentarisation period from 2007 to 2009

In 2007 the *Ecological Resettlement Project* was made the top priority in Zeku County. From each office at the township and county levels, a member was selected to participate in the project as part of new Sanjiangyuan office.²⁴² They were responsible for selecting the future resettlement places, planning the new villages and supervising construction works and the resettlement

²⁴¹ Tashi, a resettled pastoralist from rMa stod in Tongde resettlement, age 25, interviewed in June 2008.

²⁴² AD XXXII.

process.²⁴³ Most of the resettlement sites listed above, and planned during the annual ‘*Ecological Resettlement* conference’ in Zeku County in 2005-2006, did not start construction before May 2007. The second resettlement round in Zeku County targeted 765 households (3,627 people)²⁴⁴ from the core zones of the SNNR²⁴⁵, and other rTse khog areas. It was now termed the *Sanjiangyuan Ecological Resettlement Project* in Zeku County and the opening ceremony for the construction work was held on 14th of May 2007 at the Laka resettlement site in Tongren. During this round, 125 households were to be resettled to the Laka site in Tongren, 162 to the CP school site in Tongren, 71 to Longzang village in Duofudun, 69 to the administrative centre in Duofudun, 47 to Duolong village in Duofudun, 51 to Zeku County town, 176 to the administrative centre in Duohemao township and 64 households were to be moved to the administrative centre in Ningxiu Township.²⁴⁶ In 2007, the resettlements started to sprout on the grassland without any prior announcement. In places where only grass was growing a few weeks before, suddenly the first walls of the new villages would appear. Most of the resettlements were established close to the township centre, except those in Maixiu, Duofudun Township, which are on the border of the SNNR core zone of the Maixiu forest and became part of the local villages. All of them were constructed close to an existing urban area.

Originally, each construction site was equipped with an information board that contained details about the project including the number of future residents, the type of the residential buildings and the planned facilities. In addition, an exact date was provided for the completion of the construction. The scheduled time

²⁴³ AD XXXV.

²⁴⁴ Between 2006 and 2007, 851 households were planned to be resettled in the entire area of Huangnan Prefecture. 86 households from Henan County and 765 households from Zeku County.

Another document by the National Peoples’ Congress indicates the same number of households to be resettled in Zeku County (765), but the number of people it includes vary (3,559 people). (AD I).

The document *Huangnan zhou Sanjiangyuan shengtai yimin gongzuo jingyan yu silu* contains 765 households with 3,620 people. (AD IX:2).

²⁴⁵ The total number of the Zeku core zone population was 16,389, whereas the local grassland capacity could only carry 12,292 people (2,235 households), therefore it was decided to relocate the exceeding number of 745 households (4,097 people). (AD XXXIV: 4).

²⁴⁶ *Protocol of the annual meeting of the Zeku County government* from 2006.

The report of the National Peoples’ Congress denotes only 44 households to be resettled to the resettlement site in Zeku County town and for 7 households there is no fixed resettlement location yet. (AD I: 1).

plan for the construction work was extremely tight, with only five months allowed for establishment of a new resettlement site. According to the information presented publicly, construction work that started in May 2007 was due to be finished by the beginning of October of the same year and the pastoralists were to start their new life in the resettlement as early as the winter of 2007/2008. In reality, most of these spots remained under construction and uninhabited until the end of the year 2008. The report of the National Peoples' Congress, composed after an investigative journey in July 2007, also found fault with the construction delays at the resettlement sites. According to its findings, until the 5th of July, only 30 percent of the construction works had been completed, which according to the schedule left only three months to complete the remaining 70 percent of all the construction works. The report complains about insufficient coordination between the offices in charge of the resettlement and about the insufficient speed of construction work, which was in turn caused by the low number of workers and bad weather conditions. Additionally, the report criticizes the quality of the construction work. The material used does not fulfil the required norms, the skills of the employed workers are too poor and they do not adhere to the instructions provided.²⁴⁷ Despite all the implementation problems the resettlement construction in Zeku County continued, with the difference that during the extended construction period, the signs providing details about each construction site vanished.

6.2.1. Examples from selected resettlement sites

6.2.1.1. Resettlement sites for pastoralists from Zeku County in Tongren

There were two resettlement sites scheduled to be established outside of the Zeku County area, in the neighbouring county of Tongren, the Laka site and the CP school site.

The Laka *Ecological Resettlement* site in Tongren:

The Laka resettlement is situated in Tongren County, about one kilometre away from Tongren town, the capital of the Huangnan Prefecture, right next to

²⁴⁷ AD I: 4.

the prison on the new road to Xining. It was announced as part of the *Ecological Resettlement Project* within the Sanjiangyuan environmental protection policy.



- Zeku county *Sanjiangyuan Ecological Resettlement Project*.
- Size: 7500 m²
- Costs: 3,665,788 RMB
- Start of the work: 12.5.2007
- Estimated end of the work: 30.8.2007

The buildings at the Laka site are two-family bungalows. Each house has two separate flats, each in one half of the building (see figure 35). Most of the workers on the construction site in summer 2007 were Han or Chinese Muslim seasonal workers from Ledu County or Gansu Province. Tibetan workers were very rarely found on such construction sites. According to my worker informants, these houses were built for older pastoralists and small children from Zeku County. There was a plan to build a school within the site, which would make it easier for the children of the pastoralists to attend school regularly. The young parents of the children, the middle generation, were to remain on the grassland to herd the livestock and support the family members in the resettlement with dairy products. This arrangement reflects the pastoralist's habit of household splitting and was not part of the agenda of the resettlement project.



Figure 35: Construction site of the Laka resettlement in Tongren County, August 2007

Even though those pastoralists appointed for resettlement at the Laka site did not have to give up the whole of their pastureland immediately, they did not seem to be very enthusiastic about the opportunities that life in an urban resettlement could offer to them. While they felt that to possess a house and be on the governmental subsidy list is a positive result, nevertheless they did not want to shift the focus of their life entirely to the village. Tsering, a 27-year-old pastoralist from sTobs ldan, expressed the opinion of the majority of pastoralists affected by resettlement measures:

“I do not know if we can split our family and leave someone on the grassland, [if we move to the resettlement]. I hope we can do so. Anyway I do not want to move there, but I want the house....”²⁴⁸

²⁴⁸ Tsering, a 27-year-old pastoralist from sTobs ldan assigned to resettle to Tongren, interviewed in June 2009.

Being pastoralists is not only an occupation: it is a social group and a way of life, and its members strongly identify with their pastoral identity, wanting to keep their affiliation with their pastoral land and communities in the future as well. This fact might make them less flexible to adapt to the new environment, but the current situation also does not offer many income options for the resettled people. Dorje, a 32-year-old pastoralist from sTobs ldan, described the worries and attitudes towards the resettlement policy as follows:

“We do not know what to do [in the resettlement] for living. If we really have to go there, then there is nothing we can do. At the moment I do not intend to move there, because I do not like the place...Otherwise I usually just follow the others in what they say or do. For example the people from our village area who were assigned for resettlement wrote a proposal to the government to build a house there, where we could do business, with shops or restaurants inside, so we could make some money. The committee offered us to join this [resettlement project] and said, if we succeed, this project would be helpful for us. I do not have any ideas myself, so I just told them I am following the opinion of the others.

...For me it is the best to be a pastoralist. We can do nothing in a city like Tongren, because we do not speak Chinese and we do not have any skills. What can we do there? We are just hoping that we do not need to move at all in the future, as the prefecture leader said, that the new house was just a kind of help from the government to us....

The villagers said that the resettlement houses are very good and that we are stupid if we do not want it. So we thought the resettlement must be something really good for the pastoralists.

...Sometimes I feel happy and sometimes I am scared. I am happy that we got some support together with the house, but I am scared hearing what happened to pastoralists who resettled in mGo log.”²⁴⁹

The pastoralists find themselves in a complicated situation. They want the benefits from such governmental projects as the demand for cash among the

²⁴⁹ Dorje, a 32-year-old pastoralist from sTobs ldan assigned to resettle to Tongren, interviewed in June 2009.

pastoralist households increases and it becomes difficult to earn enough through animal husbandry only. The dilemma is that these people do not know any other occupation than being a herder, and do not want to change their habits and lead a sedentary way of life. They do apply to participate on projects like resettlement, but only because the government expects this from them and they want to avoid trouble. Still, they retain hope they will not be selected, or that the benefits will outweigh the negatives and that it will be possible to reduce the changes to a minimum. Some pastoralists, like the 38-year-old Nima from sTobs ldan, decide to resell the new house even if this is against the conditions of the resettlement project agenda.

“I do not want to go to the [resettlement] house. I have some yaks, sheep and horses and I love to be a pastoralist. If I go there, there will be nothing I can do. I do not speak Chinese and I do not know even how to read and write in Tibetan. Therefore it would not be a good place for me to live. Because of that, I sold the house to my brother, but the government does not know. We changed the names and all information. I did not give up my land and I did not sign my name to do that...My brother paid me 10,000 RMB for the house. I paid 6,000 RMB to the government, so the actual amount I earned was 4,000 RMB.”²⁵⁰

Even more lucrative is the reselling of apartments built directly in the town in Tongren.

CP school *Ecological Resettlement* site in Tongren:

This resettlement site, designed for 162 households from Maixiu, is situated directly in the town of Tongren. Its position in the middle of an urban area and the buildings in the form of blocks of flats (see figure 14 and 36) are completely different from all other resettlement sites designed to be built in year 2007. It has no courtyard around. Moving to such apartments will

²⁵⁰ Nima, a 38-year-old pastoralist from sTobs ldan assigned to resettle to Tongren, interviewed in June 2009.

probably be the biggest challenge for the pastoralists concerning the change of lifestyle.



Figure 36: Construction site of CP school resettlement in Tongren, June 2008

Both resettlement sites for the rTse khog pastoralists in Tongren County were not finished before autumn 2008, an almost year-long delay.

Some of my informants among the older Tibetan inhabitants of traditional farming villages that became absorbed into the urban area of Tongren prefecture town earlier, expressed their discontent with the plan to move the pastoralists from Zeku County to Tongren. They described the pastoralists as dirty, and lacking any culture of living in houses.²⁵¹ The farmers were afraid that the pastoralists, having no work and not enough money, would come to town to steal and make trouble. Historically, Tibetan pastoralists and farmers have usually had good relations with each other. Each group had their own area to live and to work and they partly depended on one another. Pastoralists supplied the farmers with milk products in exchange for grain. Both of them lived in areas defined by nature and living conditions, and they met only for the

²⁵¹ Tibetan village representative and local government member, age 59, interviewed in August 2007.

purposes of trade. Both parties respected the lifestyle of the others. However, in the case of moving pastoralists from Zeku County into the resettlement near Tongren town, the pastoralists would penetrate into the sphere of the farmers, who subsequently perceive this physical coexistence as a kind of threat.

6.2.1.2. Resettlement sites in Duofudun Township

Other sites are situated within the area of Zeku County. In the majority of cases, the pastoralists that become engaged with the resettlement project have a choice between local resettlement within the township or the resettlement site either near the county centre or in Tongren. In Duofudun Township, three sites were designed during the first resettlement wave. The resettlement site in Duofudun Township, the administrative centre, designed for 69 households (see figure 37),



Figure 37: Information board at the construction site of the Duofudun resettlement site, August 2007

was built as an extension of the small town along the road between Tongren town and Zeku County town.

- Zeku county Sanjiangyuan *Ecological Resettlement Project* of the 2005-2006 plan.
- Start of the work: 8.5.2007
- End of the work (estimate): 5.10.2007
- Houses with courtyard
- Each family: 466,7m²
- Livestock settlement 60m²
- Greenhouse 60m²
- Community water, electricity, road, broadcast supply
- General sanitation facilities, other facilities in succession



Figure 38: Construction site of resettlement in Duofudun Township town, August 2007

The site consists of the same two-family bungalows (see figure 38) as in the Laka site in Tongren, which is also the type of house used in all recent resettlement sites in Zeku County. There is enough space to keep a small amount of livestock and a greenhouse facility to plant vegetables.

Other houses that belong to the resettlement project in Duofudun Township were completed in Duolong and Longzang villages. In Longzang, close to the Maixiu forest, the new resettlement site was simply integrated into the already existing village (see figure 39). The Maixiu forest and its surrounding area is the lowest part of Zeku County, and is famous for its high-quality medicinal herbs that are traditionally collected here as a means of making a living. The Maixiu grassland area is not very large, so herding is not really a realistic possibility, and in addition the local terrain is not suitable for farming. The pastoralist households who were resettled in Longzang had to pay for their new houses. In 2008 there were only around 30 households inhabiting these houses. The circumstances under which the houses were distributed did not comply with the guidelines for the *Ecological Resettlement Project* made by the Central Government.



Figure 39: Resettlement site in Longzang village, Zeku County, June 2008

The final administration and distribution of the houses is under the jurisdiction of the county government, and this official body applies the methods most suitable for local benefit, which are often in contradiction to the rules. In Longzang village, local government officials offered the houses for sale publicly, so that several houses were sold to young married couples who originally came from the existing Longzang village and simply used the chance to buy a cheap house. About one-half of the constructed houses remained empty through 2008.

Local pastoralists from sTobs ldan, like for example the 70 year old Drolma and 33 year old Tsering Lhamo, admit that life as a herder is full of hardship. Nevertheless they prefer it to resettlement, because as pastoralists they are self-sufficient.

„It is nothing great to be a pastoralist...but it is better to live on the grassland and herd animals than to live down in the village. [At the resettlement] there is no grass and no livestock, we would be hungry. The money will not rain from the sky on its own... [As pastoralists] we have our own food, provided by our animals. Tsampa we must buy from the state... We sell milk and yoghurt and for the money we earn we buy other food.

Some people from our village moved down into the new houses down in Maixiu...They do not like it there. There is no income.

No one was forced to move. Those people went on their free will. Those, who wanted now live in a house...²⁵²

My informants from the resettlement in Longzang village in Maixiu confirm this statement. They were unable to imagine how life in a village would be before they moved into the new houses. Before moving, they were self-sufficient through their livestock; now it is hard for them to find a new source of income. They sold all their herds and simply moved into the resettlement houses, and although the pastures still remain the contracted property of each

²⁵² Two female pastoralists from Maixiu, Drolma, age 70 and Tsering Lhamo age 33, interviewed in June 2008.

household, without livestock it is impossible to return. However, the pastures are currently rented out to other pastoralists who still live on the grassland, providing some income for those who have moved into the village. The village of Longzang does not offer not many alternative income possibilities. There are no fields belonging to the resettled pastoralists beyond the village, and those who can afford a car work, for example as drivers. For women, it is much harder to find a new occupation and usually they just stay at home. The resettled people define their new situation as worse in comparison to their former lives as pastoralists.²⁵³

The implementation of the sedentarisation measures and the selection of participants is particular to each township and depends on the implementing officials and community leaders. As an example, I want to introduce a standard pastoralist community from Duofudun Township in Zeku County; for the purposes of this dissertation, I will call this place the community rGyal bo²⁵⁴. The rGyal bo community is a pastoral locality situated above 4,000 m in altitude, near a river. It has about 250 inhabitants who all live from pastoralism except for one government official, who receives a salary of about 1,200 RMB per month from the state. A local school that accommodates about 80 students in four classes was established in 1998²⁵⁵. In 2007, there was only one university student and two high school graduates in the whole community. 95 percent of the inhabitants of the rGyal bo community are illiterate, as none of the people aged now over 40 ever attended a school. Prior to 2007, before the government strengthened the regulations regarding school attendance, about half of the school-aged children remained at home helping their parents herd animals. In 2007, the community leader, instructed by the local government, introduced a project designed within the framework of environmental protection of the Sanjiangyuan to local pastoralists. So far, the pastoralists have obtained no further information about the project details, but the position of the rGyal bo community near to a river would suggest that it was part of the

²⁵³ Female resettled pastoralist from sTobs ldan, age 26, interviewed in June 2008.

²⁵⁴ For security reasons, I will not present the real name of the community here, and use the fictive name rGyal bo instead.

²⁵⁵ The local school was build with private help. In 2011, this school was closed down by the government together with other village schools in Zeku County.

Ecological Resettlement Project. Moreover, the resettlement sites the families could choose from were among those built in 2007, which used to be equipped with the information boards describing the agenda of the *Ecological Resettlement Project*. The pastoralists learned that the government would offer them a new house under advantageous conditions either in the township centre of Doufudun or in Zeku County town, or near to Tongren town. Furthermore, the community leader mentioned that sooner or later all of the pastoralists will have to resettle, and therefore the households should take advantage of the currently offered benefits as later resettlement measures without benefits for the pastoralist population might follow. Encouraged by the promised advantages, almost the whole community applied for this project. Due to the availability of only 13 houses in the first round, the community leader excluded all those households who in the previous years had profited from the free solar panel supplement from the government. The community leader then put the names of the remaining households into a hat, from which he selected the future participants of the housing project. Sandrub, a 39-year-old pastoralists from rGyal bo describes the selection process as follows:

“At first, all the families who did not get solar panels got together and put their names in a hat. Then the community leader selected thirteen names. My name was also selected and I was very happy about that. At that time, we did not know that we would have to give up 50 percent of our land to the government.”²⁵⁶

After the participant households were selected, their representatives were invited to the township to complete the contract with the government. This procedure was also performed without the pastoralists being provided with more detailed information about the project they were going take part in. Sandrub explains the further procedure:

²⁵⁶ Sandrub, 39-year-old pastoralist from the rGyal bo pastoral community registered for resettlement to Duofudun town, interviewed in June 2009.

“After our name was selected, the community leader informed us that we have to go to the township government to write something for the new house. So we went to the township government office. There were also people from other communities, but no one had a clear idea about what exactly we have to do there.

...

We wrote something, but I do not know if it was the contract or not. I think it was. ...

We got a form with several questions from the official leader. The first question was whether we already have a house in the township seat that would be in as good conditions as the new resettlement houses. In case we had such a house, the government would only give us money support but would not build a new house for us. We would still have to move to that house and give the land to the government. The government would give us money support for several years.

I do not have such a house so I answered with no.

Another question was about the number of our livestock. I wrote the number of my yaks, sheep and horses...The form said, that I have to sell 50 percent of my livestock.

Another question asked if I would give my whole land or 50 percent of my land to the government. When I read that, I felt very sad that I am going to lose my land. I did not know what else I could do so I wrote 50 percent of my land.

...

At that time, I did not say anything. I asked the other people about it, but they were also really confused. Somebody said we should write that we give up the whole land, as in that case we might get more support from the government. Somebody else said we should only give up half of the land as we do not know whether we will get any benefits or not.²⁵⁷

²⁵⁷ Sandrub, 39-year-old pastoralist from the rGyal bo pastoral community registered for resettlement to Duofudun town, interviewed in June 2009.

Although many of the meeting participants did not know how to read or write, nobody explained the conditions of the contract to them. As Dorje explained, they were just requested to sign the paperwork:

“I am not sure what we did there. I signed my name with a fingerprint mark on a piece of paper. I do not now how to read and write, so I did not know what the paper was saying. No one explained it to us. I just followed the other people and put my mark on it.

...

At that time, many people said that if we do not sign it, we could not get any governmental help in the future. That is why I did it, to get help from the government later.”²⁵⁸

Although the majority of my informants from the rGyal bo community claim that the grassland condition in their village had deteriorated in comparison with the situation before the 1980s, only 10 percent believe that the resettlement, as implemented by the government, might result in the improvement of the grassland vegetation. On the contrary, the pastoralists, like for example 48-year-old Norbu, claim that a long period without livestock grazing on the pastures would actually harm the ecosystem:

“I do not think that the resettlement is favourable to the grassland, because the grassland needs to be grazed every year...If livestock does not graze on the pastures for a long time, then this will be very bad for the land. The rotten grass on the top would not allow the fresh grass to grow. Old Tibetan people say that if a grassland is not grazed for 9 years, then it becomes what they call useless land. The livestock will not eat such grass anymore.”²⁵⁹

²⁵⁸ Dorje, 32-year-old pastoralist from rGyal bo pastoral community registered for resettlement to Tongren town, interviewed in June 2009.

²⁵⁹ Norbu, 48-year-old pastoralist from rGyal bo pastoral community registered for resettlement to Zeku town, interviewed in June 2009.

The pastoralists primarily blame the pika and the underground pika, together with black caterpillars, for the degradation of the grassland, and agree with the extermination of these animals. However, the measures taken to excise them from the grassland have obviously not been very successful. Furthermore, the pastoralists suggested banning the mining of gold from the grassland, which causes severe damages to the land and vegetation.

Participation in resettlement projects usually happens through free will, as the individual households are usually not selected by the government and brought to resettlement by force. They do apply to the schemes by themselves, but their decision is based on insufficient information. In the case of the rGyal bo community, nobody among my informants involved in the project agreed with the resettlement methods, as they did not agree with the loss of land and livestock connected with the purchase of the new house, as Dorje explained:

“I do not like to live there [in the resettlement]. I liked the project, because we can get a house for a very low price and they [the government] also help us with some money. I mean that if the government would not take our land away, it would be a really good thing. In case they really do take the land, then we have no chance to survive.”²⁶⁰

The pastoralists from the rGyal bo community paid 6,000 RMB for each new house in the resettlement. So far, for the years 2007 and 2008, they have obtained 3,000 RMB in financial support from the government per year per household. Additionally, each winter 500 RMB were granted from the government as a fuel allowance.

The subsidy is low and uncertain. The pastoralists speculate that the duration of the governmental subsidy will be five years for households who moved into the township seat of Duofudun and ten years for households who chose to move out of the township, to Zeku and Tongren County seats. For the pastoralists without education, there seem to be no work opportunities in the new village.

²⁶⁰ Dorje, 32-year-old pastoralist from rGyal bo pastoral community registered for resettlement to Tongren town, interviewed in June 2009.

Few hope to have success as drivers, the usual job for those who can afford a car, but the majority have no idea what to live on after their livestock and land is gone. Up until now, in the Zeku County resettlement sites no additional employment opportunities have been created by the government. For this reason, the majority of the pastoralists from the rGyal bo community, when contracted for the resettlement project, still remained on the grassland in 2009. Those who have already moved into the resettlement houses have split their household, leaving part of the family on the grassland to continue herding animals and supply the members in the resettlement with food. Those who have remained on the grassland are ready to do so until they are forced to move, and according to Kelsang, a 39 year old pastoralist from rGyal bo, even after that, they hope that splitting the household between the grassland and the resettlement will be possible.

“The government did not tell us whether it is ok or not [to split the household], but we are doing it this way. Some family members live on the grassland where we have some livestock left and other family members came to live in the new house. When the government people come to visit us and nobody would be living in the house, they would stop giving us help. Therefore some family members must live in the new house.”²⁶¹

In case the government should force the pastoralists to give up their use rights over the grassland, it could be difficult to survive in the resettlement without food supplements from the livestock. Tsampa, the 38-year-old pastoralist from rGyal bo, describes the situation after moving into a resettlement as follows:

“Here [in the resettlement] we have nothing, but an empty house. Our life is really bad here. We cannot drink milk tea as before. We have to buy even yak dung and also meat, butter, cheese and everything else. It is

²⁶¹ Kelsang, 39-year-old pastoralist from rGyal bo pastoral community registered for resettlement to Duofudun town, interviewed in September 2009.

very difficult if one does not have money. This is not a good place to live.
We just hope to get some support from the government.”²⁶²

According to my fieldwork records from 2008 and 2009, which include interviews with ten from the thirteen households assigned for resettlement in the rGyal bo community, the pastoralists have already reduced their livestock far beyond the lowest required quota of 50 percent mentioned in the contract the pastoralists had to sign. The number of yaks was reduced by 77 percent, the number of sheep by as much as 96.5 percent and the number of horses by 63 percent among the participating households. The people from the rGyal bo community did not have clear information about the project duration and any possibility of returning to the grassland. Nevertheless, they hope that a return to a fully pastoral way of life will sooner or later be allowed again. They still consider themselves as pastoralists and view life in the resettlement as a temporary measure. Therefore it is difficult for them to adapt their thinking about the main source of income to a different sphere and start a completely new life in the urban environment.

6.2.1.3. *Ecological Resettlement* site in Zeku County town

The resettlement site in Zeku County town, designed for 51 households as part of the Sanjiangyuan *Ecological Resettlement Project* (see figure 40), was built on the southern side of the administrative seat (see figure 41). Similar to the other resettlements, the construction of these houses began with much enthusiasm in summer 2007. Despite this initial spurt, the site was only finished during 2008, but was already partly inhabited in summer 2008. The new houses were given to the pastoralists for 6,000 RMB. Except for the small governmental subsidy, there were no optional sources of income in the new village. Therefore, as local pastoralists were not forced to give up their pastures immediately, most of the households assigned for the Zeku resettlement site remained on the grassland.

²⁶² Tsampa, 38-year-old pastoralist from rGyal bo pastoral community registered for resettlement to Duofudun town, interviewed in September 2009.



Figure 40: Resettlement construction site in Zeku County administrative centre, August 2007

Some houses were also sold directly to non-pastoralist households interested in cheap housing or resold by the assigned pastoralists, who changed their minds and decided to give up the new house again.²⁶³ Even though the practice of reselling the houses is forbidden by the *Ecological Resettlement Project* rules, it seems to be happening on a relatively large scale, at least in the various resettlements in Zeku and Tongren Counties.

Particularly after 2009, sedentarisation activities started to flourish in Zeku County. New quarters formed from houses constructed predominantly as part of the *Nomadic Settlement Project* grew on all sides of the town (see figure 42), waiting to inhabit a large number of pastoral immigrants.

²⁶³ According to Tibetan, governmental employee in Zeku County, age 54, 12.08.2007.



Figure 41: Resettlement construction site in Zeku County town, August 2007



Figure 42: Settlement constructions around Zeku County administrative seat, November 2011

6.2.1.4. Resettlement site in Ningxiu

Ningxiu was one of the townships with a successful establishment of a resettlement village during the first wave in 2003-2006. By 2008, the local new village already exceeded the number of originally scheduled houses. As in the other sites in Zeku County, the houses erected here are one or two-family brick bungalows (see figure 43). A school building is provided on site.

The government reports describe a slight income improvement among the affected households after they moved into the new urban site in Ningxiu. The 328 households scheduled to resettle here from Zhigeri village during the first resettlement planning wave increased their income by 16.4 percent (from 1,223.58 RMB to 1,424.13 RMB). In comparison with the average income of the whole township, it was still higher by 2.46 percent. The report further says that the income of the resettled households is obtained from planting vegetables among 60 households, 18 households fatten cows and sheep, 12 households are engaged in transportation, 35 in business, 46 households work on external constructions and 48 households are engaged in other activities²⁶⁴. The report does not comment if any government subsidies were counted as part of the income of the resettled households, nor does it say if only cash income is counted or if it also includes livestock as an important part of the pastoral household economy. Further, it does not comment on the monthly expenses the resettled households have and which might have increased through purchasing, for example, food for money in comparison to actual expenses on the grassland. Grassland with a total area of 87,000 *mu* also belongs to the Ningxiu resettlement, of which 81,800 *mu* can be used for herding (implying about 17.9 *mu* per person). The official records say that in 2009, 4,845 livestock grazed on this grassland. The pastoralists who moved to this resettlement permanently reduced their livestock by 6,174 sheep units. The livestock reduction, together with seasonal herding, helped to reduce the grazing pressure and improve the balance between grassland and livestock. As a result, the vegetation coverage rate increased by 10 percent and the grass density increased by 15 percent.²⁶⁵ According to my pastoralist informants from the resettlement near Ningxiu administrative centre, the people came here in search of an easier lifestyle. In

²⁶⁴ AD XI: 4.

²⁶⁵ AD XXX: 6.

the grassland, the pastures are deteriorating and there is insufficient grass to feed the livestock herds. In Zeku County, the population is still growing and in some parts the capacity of the grassland has been exceeded. To reach the resettlement quota given by the Central or Provincial Government, the local government officials visit the pastoralist communities to offer the people the possibility of giving up herding and moving into a modern house. State financial support was also promised to those who move.²⁶⁶ The pastoralists are usually unable to imagine what life is going to be like in an urban or village setting, and most of the arguments the officials give sound positive and reasonable. However, the households who accept the governmental offer are invariably those who have suffered the loss of their livestock through some natural disaster such as snowstorms, or poor households with bad pastureland and insufficient livestock to make a living. Wealthy families always prefer to remain and continue herding animals.

In Ningxiu, the houses were not distributed for free, hence the pastoralists who moved in had to pay 3,000 RMB for each house. After settling down in the new house, most of my informants agreed that they would immediately return back to the grassland, if they were allowed to do so and if the pastures were not in such a poor condition. They agreed that making a living in the new urban environment is sometimes even harder than before as herders. Dawa Tsering, a 61-year-old pastoralist relocated to the Ningxiu resettlement, summarizes the situation as follows:

”The government built some houses here. It is good for the children and also we get some support from the state. That is why we wanted to move in here.

...

It used to be better in the grassland. We had our own livestock and we could wander around the grassland. We are pastoralists. We used to have our own milk and butter and we knew there was always something to eat. The disadvantage was that lately there was not enough grass to feed our animals. Also, we have to keep our animals inside a fenced court and

²⁶⁶ A 61-year-old pastoralist, resettled to Ningxiu resettlement, interviewed in June 2008.

wild animals are eating the grass. What shall we do in the future? There are more people and the grassland is decreasing. They told us they had a solution for us, a house in the village. So now we are here, but there is nothing to do for living. We have no pastures. There is a school for the children and a house, but what about elderly people? The land belongs to us, but still it is not better than before. There is nothing to live on.

...

They told us we will have our own garden, where the elderly people can work, but we do not know how to grow vegetables. They told us that everything will be just great. A house given by the government and electricity is great, but still there is nothing here to give us food. Where shall we take our tsampa? That is why the new place is bad indeed.

...



Figure 43: Ningxiu Township resettlement, Zeku County, June 2008

What do I wish? An old person of 61 like me, a herder, I wish to be in the grassland full of flowers herding my livestock, drink milk and yoghurt...go there where the good grass grows...But recently there is not enough grass and many animals died and so the people became unhappy.

They went to the town and cried and asked the government to help them. So the government built these houses for children and old people. So it is like this and we cannot return back. Except for some vegetables there is nothing here. Old people like me must earn money, so we take what work there is, collect caterpillar fungus or work on road construction. Still we do not earn enough...²⁶⁷

6.2.1.5. Resettlement in Heri Township

A more optimistic situation prevails among the pastoralists from the Hor community in Heri Township in Zeku County. Because of the local tradition of stone-carving in Hor, these households were able to adapt more easily to the new living conditions in the resettlement. 185 households already belonged to the Hor community, with 746 people. Between 2006 and 2009, 100 households (510 people) have already resettled to the Heri Township administrative centre. The Heri resettlement consists of 100 houses, each with an area of 60 square meters. The resettlement constructions also include 32 double-function greenhouses that can be used as sheds for animals during the winter and as greenhouses for planting vegetables during the summer, a refuse tip, a public toilet, a hospital, a show room and an activity place for party members. The total poverty alleviation investment to the Hor community was 1,592,400 RMB, from which 600,000 RMB were designated for subsidy payments to the resettled households, 740,000 RMB were designated to alleviate poverty among the villagers and 105,600 RMB were designated for vocational training for the resettled pastoralists. The rest of the money invested was divided as direct aid to the poorest and oldest people, to pay subsidies to party members and retired cadres and members of a welfare programme, for medical insurance and treatment and as a subsidy for one demobilized soldier.²⁶⁸

The 600,000 RMB designated for the resettled households works out at only 6,000 RMB for each of the 100 households in the Heri resettlement. This calculation correlates with the statements of my informants, who claimed to receive 3,000 RMB of annual subsidy plus an additional 500 RMB to buy coal

²⁶⁷ Dawa Tsering, a 61-year-old pastoralist from Ningxiu resettlement, interviewed in June 2008.

²⁶⁸ AD XXX: 8-9.

or yak dung to heat in winter in 2007 and 2008. As in the Duofudun resettlements, the Heri resettlement households received no subsidy for 2009 by the end of the year. Considering that each household in this village had to pay 6,000 RMB to get a new house, the balance of income and expenditure is about zero.

In Hor, the government also announced that the resettlement was necessary because of the severe degradation of the pasturelands. Nevertheless, only 30 percent of my informants describe the quality of their grassland as bad and none of them think that the measure of resettlement is going to improve the grassland conditions. Still, local pastoralists seem to welcome the resettlement idea of the government. In each of the interviewed households, at least one of the family members is involved in stone-carving. There seems to be demand for these products²⁶⁹ as all stone-carving households claim to have achieved a higher income through selling these carvings from the resettlement, resulting in an improvement to their way of life. Rgyalo, a pastoralist from the Hor community, was one who decided to try the life in the new village:

“We decided to move [to the resettlement]. We heard that the people who move will be supported by the government. Our family does not have much livestock and we mainly depend on stone carving. That is why we wanted to move in here, because we can make more money.”²⁷⁰

After moving to the new village they have more free time and can concentrate on this business. Dondrub, a pastoralist from the Heri resettlement, confirms that there has been an improvement of his household's living conditions:

“In our community, everybody can carve stones, like my family....Our life is getting better here [in the resettlement].”²⁷¹

²⁶⁹ http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2009-12/29/content_12720621.htm.

²⁷⁰ Rgyalo, a pastoralist from the Heri resettlement, interviewed in September 2009.

²⁷¹ Dondrub, a pastoralist from the Heri resettlement, interviewed in September 2009.

According to the government records, in the Heri resettlement there are 208 people who study stone-carving, 100 people plant vegetables in the available greenhouses and 236 people work elsewhere. The majority of these workers are involved in collecting caterpillar fungus, while the others collect droma (Tib: gro ma, Chin: 蕨麻 juema) or yak dung or are short term workers at construction sites.

The average income of the resettled pastoralists in Heri has already increased²⁷². The highest income for six months in 2009 was achieved by the people involved in the stone-carving business, who per person earned on average 1,680 RMB, more than the caterpillar fungus harvesters with an average of only 1,115 RMB per person.²⁷³

The stone-carving tradition is also being promoted for purposes of tourism, which can bring additional income to this resettlement village. As Cepten Tashi, the leader of the Hor pastoral community, said, without the income possibilities from the local tradition of stone-carving, the Hor households would probably be not so enthusiastic about moving into the new village:

“In the case of my community, I do agree with the resettlement methods, because our community has the tradition of carving stones. Through this we can get income. But in the case of other pastoral communities, I do not agree with the resettlement, because there is nothing.”²⁷⁴

Even if the majority seem to be satisfied with the resettlement conditions in Heri, the resettled households still do not want to give up their land. All of my informants split their households and keep family members on the grassland as well as in the resettlement, or at the very least they rent out their pastures to other pastoralists. In contrast to the members of the rGyal bo community in Duofudun Township, the local pastoralists seem not to have signed any contract with the government. They claim the land remains their property and

²⁷² Chen 2007: 143.

²⁷³ AD XXX: 9-10.

²⁷⁴ Leader of the Hor pastoral community in the Heri resettlement, interviewed in September 2009.

they have the right to return at anytime. The community leader corrected this statement and said that the resettled households can only return in winter to the grassland, not during the summer. He nevertheless confirmed that in his village there was no contract made with the government.

Such a situation as in the Heri resettlement seems to comply with the needs and wishes of the pastoralists, but it also violates the governmental rules of *Ecological Resettlement Project*, which presume total livestock reduction and a commitment to withdraw from the grassland for a certain period of time. Future research will show if the Central and Provincial Governments are going to strengthen control over the local implementation of environmental projects, and if the pastoralists will also later be able to keep at least part of their pastures and livestock to supply themselves with dairy products and meat.

6.2.1.6. Examples from the resettlement in Henan County

In Henan County, the second pastoral county of Huangnan Prefecture, the grassland condition is better in comparison with Zeku County, in part because of the lower altitude of Henan. However, the government also decided to apply resettlement measures here. In Henan County, the Sanjiangyuan resettlement construction plans seemed to be accomplished more successfully and closer to the schedule. The resettlement was part of an ecological construction designed for the whole county in 2003. Apart from the *Ecological Resettlement Project*, the plan was to implement the *Turning Pastureland into Grassland Project*, *Enclose Hillsides to Raise Trees* (Chin: 封山育林 fengshan yulin), *Prevent of Harm Caused by Mice*, *strengthen Fire Protection of Forests and Grassland*, *establish Drinking Water Supply for People and Livestock*, *construct Livestock Raising Facilities* (Chin: 建设养畜 jianshe yangxu), etc. By 2007, 432 households were resettled. These households reduced their livestock by 318,400 heads and retained only 4.25 *mu* to practice seasonal herding.²⁷⁵

²⁷⁵ AD XXXVI: 1-2.

The new resettlement near the Henan County town has been inhabited since the year 2007. The houses were distributed free of charge by the government. The local pastoralists do not complain about the lack of forage for their animals, and present other reasons for participating in the resettlement, mainly the obligatory school attendance for children and the difficulties of reaching the school from the grassland. The households who obtained houses here also claim that they were allowed to keep the original grassland and their livestock herds. For this reason, they do not complain about the implementation of the resettlement project.²⁷⁶

However, the governmental report from the Henan County Development and Reform Department admits that there were difficulties connected with the implementation of the above-mentioned ecological constructions. For example, it complains about the unequal implementation of the ecological construction projects throughout the county. Only a few townships implemented the projects according to the plan. And the implementation of scheduled projects themselves sometimes brings additional problems. For example, through the closing of hillsides for tree planting, the size of the grassland shrank, which caused a shortage of fodder for livestock. The project also includes planting of grass where the grassland has already deteriorated. Each household has to plant grass on 5 *mu* of land, yet some households cannot afford to do this and relinquish the land. As a result, these households dig the grassland over in places where good grass is already existent to avoid the planting, which of course contributes to additional erosion, rather than improving the grassland conditions. Similar to the resettlements in Zeku County, in Henan the livelihood of the resettled pastoralists is not well secured and there are not enough opportunities to make a living without livestock. Therefore, some households, not being able or willing to remain in the resettlements, return to their original grassland and risk conflict with the law.²⁷⁷

²⁷⁶ Middle-aged male and female pastoralists from the resettlement near the Henan County seat, interviewed in August 2007.

²⁷⁷ AD XXXVI: 2-3.

6.3. Sedentarisation measures in Zeku County since 2009

After the numerous disturbances among the Tibetan population in China in the year 2008, the Central Government intensified its focus on Tibetan pastoralists. Under the label ‘Development of Tibetan Areas’, the government designed additional projects to support and help Tibetan pastoralist households. The intention behind these projects was to persuade Tibetan pastoralists of the good will of the government. Additionally, by accelerating the sedentarisation process, the government hoped to obtain better control of the pastoralists who live on the grassland. To reach this goal, a project to supply pastoralist households with houses, preferably in new villages, has been developed, known as the *Nomadic Settlement Project*, which was introduced in 2009. Since then, the majority of constructed settlements in the grasslands of the Qinghai province have been built under the title of *Nomadic Settlement*. The *Ecological Resettlement Project* implemented earlier, which according to Zeku local government officials in charge of grassland management and settlement constructions should have only affected pastoralists with land along rivers, and the *Turning Pastureland into Grassland Project* designed to stop erosion and accumulation of mud in the watercourses, which would negatively influence the three major rivers of China, require the households involved to sell all their livestock and resettle. By contrast, the *Nomadic Settlement Project* was designed to affect the whole county and all remaining pastoralists registered in the grassland. New settlement villages were being built in each township of Zeku County, targeting about 30 percent of the pastoralist population every year. At this rate, within only three years all pastoralists of Zeku County would be involved in the *Nomadic Settlement Project*. In 2009, each household had to pay 5,000 RMB for their new house, the rest of the costs, ca. 40,000 RMB, being covered by the government. So far, the pastoralists could keep their livestock and land and move only part of the household into the new house,²⁷⁸ which indeed exactly corresponds to the wishes of the majority of my Tibetan pastoralist informants, who want to benefit from a comfortable house without giving up pastureland and livestock. Nevertheless, for the future the government has already made plans that will indeed affect Tibetan pastoralism.

²⁷⁸ A Tibetan member of Zeku County government, responsible for grassland distribution and settlement constructions, interviewed in October 2009.

The whole system of ‘backward’ Tibetan pastoralism is intended to be modernised²⁷⁹, a concept that is likely to mean a focus on rapid fattening of the animals in cattle sheds²⁸⁰, and a restriction on traditional grassland pastoralism. Furthermore, the Zeku County official admitted that the government is preparing further plans ‘to protect the grassland’ and these will also include ‘protection’ of Tibetan yaks and sheep, i.e. that pastoralists should not be allowed to kill these animals in an uncontrolled manner. The yak and sheep products should then be sold as medicine and organic food to Eastern China. The Tibetan pastoralists should not be engaged in animal husbandry anymore and instead the government will pay them a financial subsidy. These measures would definitely lead to an extinction of the traditional Tibetan pastoral way of life.²⁸¹



Figure 44: Nomadic Settlement construction site near Zeku County town, October 2009

²⁷⁹ AD XII.

²⁸⁰ Construction of animal sheds has recently become part of various governmental modernisation programs. Together with fencing, house constructions and grass planting, it is included, for example, in the new *Set of Four* (Chin: 四配套) program of the 11th Five-Year Plan, which was completed in 2010. (AD XIII: 8).

²⁸¹ A Tibetan member of Zeku County government, responsible for grassland distribution and settlement constructions, interviewed in October 2009.



Figure 45: Nomadic Settlement near Zeku County town, October 2009



Figure 46: Nomadic Settlement in Duofudun Township seat, October 2009

As mentioned above in chapter Five, the implementation of *Nomadic Settlement* also varies between different townships and counties. In some places, the pastoralists are allowed to build their houses by themselves near the winter grassland or a selected village spot with a governmental allowance. In Zeku County the government is in charge of construction of all *Nomadic Settlement* houses and placed contracts with companies from Qinghai and even Chongqing (see figure 44) to implement the construction.

At the beginning of the implementation of the *Nomadic Settlement Project*, the affected pastoralists were not allowed to choose the location of their new house. In 2009, all houses were built as uniform settlements situated near previously existing administrative centres or at least close to a road (see figures 45 and 46), to ensure easy access for the construction materials and workers. At the end of the first implementation year, the houses were still under construction and mostly uninhabited. For the pastoralists, it is in fact advantageous to own a house near a town for example, in cases where there are children of school attending age. Poor households with not enough livestock to secure their living also take the opportunity of moving into town and hope to find an alternative source of income to animal husbandry. In the majority of the cases, however, the small towns do not offer enough employment possibilities and the pastoralists do not possess sufficient skills and experience in other sectors beyond animal husbandry. There are no free vocational training courses offered by the government and the *Nomadic Settlement Project* does not provide a financial subsidy to its participants in contrast to the participants of the *Turning Pastureland into Grassland* or *Ecological Resettlement Projects*. To secure their living in the settlement, the pastoralists have to rely on their savings or income from caterpillar fungus collection. If more cash is needed, they work as drivers or at state construction sites in the area, where they can earn about 50-100 RMB per day.

After two years of project implementation, the Tibetan pastoralists in Zeku County announced their disgust with the local implementation of the *Nomadic Settlement Project* and requested the possibility of constructing these new houses on their winter pasture. The county government finally agreed, and since 2011 it has also been possible in Zeku County to choose between a house

in a new village or near the original pastureland (see figure 48). Another type of house construction currently within the *Nomadic Settlement Project* in Zeku County are two-storey houses along the streets of the Zeku County administrative centre, which offer the pastoralists the possibility of starting a business or opening up a shop on the ground floor level. However, the majority of these shops situated next to each other offer the same selection of sweets, drinks and small utility items and the local demand for such items cannot cover the increasing offer. All new houses constructed in Zeku County since 2010 within the *Nomadic Settlement Project*, no matter whether they are in a settlement, near the pastoralists' grassland or in town, are easy to distinguish as these are clearly labelled as such by a small plate on each door (see figure 47).



Figure 47: Door sign on houses constructed within the Nomadic Settlement Project, Zeku County, November 2011

The price the pastoralists have to pay for the new house has also increased from the original 5,000 RMB required in 2009 to 18,000-20,000 RMB per house. Although the government allowed the construction of new houses in the winter grassland area in 2011, in the same year it closed down all small primary schools that used to be a part of each community. This measure is

officially intended to improve the level of education, but now all children must attend school in often quite distant townships or county seats from the very first grade. For this reason, although the pastoralists now have the choice of building the new house on their pasture, being forced to bring the children to school results in them often opting for the house in town.



Figure 48: New house constructed within the Nomadic Settlement Project on individual pastures next to the old house, Zeku County, November 2011

Despite some negative aspects of the sedentarisation measure, the pastoralists do find ways of making the greatest advantage out of this policy. These methods are sometimes in contravention of state regulations, but in the majority of cases the officials in charge do not police the regulations very carefully or simply ignore these activities. The houses obtained through the *Nomadic Settlement Project* serve increasingly as a business asset. Being purchased for a relatively low price, they can be sold again for double or even more, which convinces many pastoral households with sufficient livestock and good-quality grassland to apply for a new house in an urban area. There are now households which possess several of these houses, each registered to different family members, who use one of them for living and rent or sell the

others. The buyers are mainly households with a pastoral background that because of their work are registered in town and therefore have no right to obtain a house within the governmental sedentarisation projects. These people want to own a house in the township of their origin and the new settlement houses are the easiest way to do so. Now it is the turn of the officials to react to the recent developments and either adapt the policy to fit the current situation or to make use of the abuse of sedentarisation projects to introduce further restrictions against the pastoral way of life.

7. Conclusion

The *Great Opening of the West* development strategy is a relatively abstract term spanning a very broad field of governmental interests, programmes and local implementation practices, which basically includes all governmental activities in project areas in the West of China since its introduction in 2000. Officially, it contains infrastructural development and economic stimulation as well as socioeconomic improvement at a household level, environmental protection and much more. Integration of predominantly minority populations inhabiting China's borderlands and improvement of political control over Western China are also important points of the development strategy. However, in practice many controversial aspects appear, for example during the implementation of economical and social development and environmental protection or cultural development: to cite one instance, the strengthening of economic interests has a negative influence on the environment and vice versa. Projects to protect the environment (for example the *Turning Pastureland into Grassland Project*) and to improve the livelihood of the pastoralists, such as the poverty alleviation approach²⁸² and resettlement (*Ecological Resettlement Project*), are supervised and implemented by different offices²⁸³, which often do not interact with each other. Each responsible office promotes the implementation of its own project and follows its goals without taking into account the short or long-term consequences that might be related to other spheres, such as fencing or sedentarisation: e.g., the economic development approach of increasing the numbers of livestock stands in opposition to the environmental development that promotes livestock reduction in order to preserve the balance of the ecosystem²⁸⁴.

²⁸² Shen, Lei 2007: v-vi.

²⁸³ The Department of Agriculture and Animal Husbandry administers *Turning Pastureland into Grassland Project* and the Development and Reform Committee administers *Ecological Resettlement Project*.

²⁸⁴ Fox, Mathiesen, Yangzom, Naess, Xu 2002: 25.

7.1. The *Great Opening of the West* and the Tibetan pastoralists

The *Great Opening of the West* development strategy first affected the cities and towns of Western China. In the countryside, by contrast, during the initial years of its implementation it was mainly presented on propaganda boards, as in Zeku County. The grassland inhabitants appreciated new roads that enabled easier access to the capitals of the prefecture and the province, and they also profited from the increasing electrification on the grassland. However, these transformations affected the Tibetan pastoralists and their livelihoods only marginally. Over time, during the subsequent years the influence of the *Great Opening of the West* development strategy on the grassland areas gradually increased and by 2011 brought about significant changes in the daily lives of a considerable number of pastoralist households, as we can see in the present case study of Zeku County. The pastoralists were targeted by the policy of poverty alleviation and socioeconomic improvement of the households in order to increase the statistically low annual income in the grassland areas. In addition they were the targets of an environmental policy that intends to restore the grassland in order to ensure sufficient water supply from the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau to the rest of China and to stop desertification in order to reduce the amount of sand brought to the coastal cities by sandstorms. In the first instance, the environmental protection projects were not designed to improve the grassland to benefit the pastoralist population. Nevertheless, the grassland inhabitants are those affected the most by this policy, and their life is now being transformed through the implementation of these projects. The measure of implementing resettlement and settlement is used to achieve the goals that concern the grassland area and its inhabitants, the Tibetan pastoralists. To enable large-scale implementation of grassland restoration projects like *Turning Pastureland into Grassland* etc. the government needs to gain access to the area and ensure control over the pastureland, which is assured through reclamation of land use rights contracted to individual households, exclusion of parts of the pastureland from herding and resettlement of pastoralist households. Consequently, this dissertation defines the current government-initiated rapid sedentarisation measures as the most significant aspect of the *Great Opening of the West* development strategy that directly influences the Tibetan pastoralists and their life and livelihoods.

7.1.1. Sedentarisation as a measure for grassland protection and grassland exploitation

The step of sedentarisation shifts the centre of the life of pastoral households affected by it from the grassland towards urban areas, and at the same time allows the government a free hand in its manipulation of the pasturelands. In most cases, the grassland vegetation can grow and restore itself under the governmental environment policy, but in some cases the excluded grassland areas are used to open mines for exploitation of gold and other available minerals even within the nature protection area of the Sanjiangyuan²⁸⁵. Understandably, mining does not serve the grassland recovery, in fact the opposite in contributing to erosion and further degradation, which allows us to presume that, at least in some cases, the goals of mineral exploitation and administrative control over Tibetan grasslands and their inhabitants are more important to the Chinese government than actual environmental and socioeconomic improvement. In the area of the Sanjiangyuan, to which Zeku County also belongs, the regulations for environmental protection are being implemented on a larger scale and more thoroughly than in other Tibetan areas. A complete relocation of pastoralists from core zones of the SNNR area and from other places of Sanjiangyuan affected by advanced degradation is taking place here.

7.1.2. Sedentarisation as a measure to improve the socioeconomic situation of individual households

For pastoralists participating in the individual sedentarisation projects, governmental compensation is assigned in the form of a house and sometimes also as a cash subsidy. The act of resettlement or settlement is advertised as a measure of poverty alleviation and improvement of the socioeconomic situation of pastoralist households as scheduled in the *Ecological Resettlement Project*. The statistical income of pastoralist households is – due to their traditional subsistence and barter economy — significantly below the country average. However the general statistics are based on cash income and are

²⁸⁵ In the year 2000, for example, in Guoluo Prefecture there were two gold mining areas and other mines to extract copper, cobalt and zinc. (Horlemann 2002: 256).

unsuitable for indicating the actual wealth of pastoralist households, which is based on the size of their herds. Although the need for cash in pastoralist households has increased significantly after industrial products brought through the modernisation and development wave reached the countryside of the Chinese West, pastoralist households which possessed livestock were at least self-sufficient in covering their daily needs for food and fuel. The new houses and facilities provided on site in some resettlements and settlements, such as a school and a nearby medical service centre, bring a certain amount of comfort into the life of pastoralist households. At the same time, life in an urban area, based on cash income and adapted to the way of life of the majority of Chinese citizens, allows an easier affiliation of pastoralist households into the national statistics. Through obtaining the subsidy, the cash income of numerous households can actually increase. However if the rules of the *Grazing Ban Resettlement* and *Ecological Resettlement Project* are followed strictly, the pastoralists must give up their herds when participating in the relocation project. In that case, with the loss of their livestock, the pastoralists lose the ability to supply their day-to-day needs and the need for cash rises immensely. Consequently, the annual subsidy of about 3,500 RMB, as provided by the government in Zeku County, cannot cover the expenditures of a whole household. It is therefore disputable if the actual socioeconomic situation of Tibetan pastoral households really does improve through the sedentarisation measure or if it instead deteriorates.

7.1.3. Sedentarisation as a measure of political control

Besides the two main development policy aims, these being environmental and socioeconomic improvement, the matter of sedentarisation also has another important effect: it enables the Central Government better control over the Tibetan pastoral population. Through policy measures like the *Nomadic Settlement Project*, the Central Government tries to secure its control over the Tibetan pastoralist population in a nonviolent way. The *Nomadic Settlement Project* speeds up the relocation of Tibetan pastoralists from the grassland into villages, as it targets all remaining pastoralist households not yet involved in any previous sedentarisation project. It offers the opportunity of a comfortable

house with good transportation access for the pastoralists, and better control over its subjects for the government through the presence of police on site. The authority of local state representatives has been additionally enhanced through other achievements of the *Great Opening of the West* development strategy, like the road network, railway and numerous new airports on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau that enable quick deployment of troops to remote corners of grassland areas in case of political emergency.

7.2. Sedentarisation – a benefit for the pastoralists or for the government?

The current concept of the *Nomadic Settlement Project* seems as well to reflect the wishes of Tibetan pastoralists: a comfortable house without renunciation of land and livestock. The loss of the pastureland and livestock in exchange for the house in a resettlement was the main aspect the pastoralists disliked in the previous projects, such as the *Ecological Resettlement Project*. Many of the pastoralist households want to use this chance to obtain the subsidy money and build a house, even if doing so was not absolutely necessary. So far, the pastoralist households involved in the *Nomadic Settlement Project* remain dependant on animal husbandry as their main source of income. The elder generation, together with children in school attendance, resides in the new house, while the middle-aged couple remains on the grassland taking care of the livestock as before. Households that do not need a residence in the new village want to acquire a house to resell it at quite a high profit to a third party, which of course is illegal, but so far has been mostly tolerated by local governments. However, the government possesses the right to prosecute such infractions at anytime.

The acceptance of the current *Nomadic Settlement Project* among the pastoralists is based on the assumption that the pastureland and livestock will remain in use by the pastoralists. The government, however, takes precautionary measures to be able to enforce the control over the pastureland in case it should need to exercise it. Locally, where contracts for the *Nomadic Settlement Project* exist, we can find an added paragraph that secures the government the right to request the pastoralists to sell their land for a minimum price, such as 6 RMB per *mu* as in some parts of Zeku County, at any time. The

long-term aim of the *Nomadic Settlement Project* is also the modernisation of Tibetan animal husbandry. A new form should replace the traditional and 'backward' way of Tibetan pastoralism, and all signs point to the inevitability that future grassland management and animal husbandry will be under closer control and greater involvement of the government. Having discovered an increasing interest of middle-class Chinese citizens in healthy food and organic products, the government understands the great potential of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau as a source for such commodities. How far the pastoralists are going to be involved in this business and what benefits, if any, it might bring to the individual households are not yet clear.

7.3. Sedentarisation – a temporary measure?

Currently, the Chinese government claims that participation in all currently active environmental and socioeconomic projects that concern Tibetan pastoralists is voluntary, and the households choose to become involved of their own free will. However, the pastoralists apply on the basis of inaccurate information and insufficient understanding of the full measure of relevant facts. The strong authority of the government and the justifiable fear of Tibetan pastoralists regarding future consequences if they decide not to follow the suggestions of the governmental representatives play a far from unimportant role. These circumstances result in the high numbers of applicants, figures that are then used by the government to legitimate the implementation of sedentarisation policy. Once a household has become involved in a resettlement or settlement or similar project and left the centre of their living on the grassland, it is not easy to return. The resettlement project guidelines include a note that relocation back to the original grassland, usually after ten years, will be possible. Nevertheless, the return of the Tibetan pastoralists to their pastures and the continuation of a pastoralist way of life seem not to be of any significant interest to the Chinese government, as the implementing offices pay attention neither to the pastoralists, whose experience it is that after a period of nine to ten years the structure of grassland vegetation changes too much to be able to serve as pastureland for livestock, nor to the reports of local Animal Husbandry Stations, whose research confirms the statements of the

pastoralists. Even if the government does not design any subsequent grassland preservation projects and intends that parts of the grassland should remain suitable for herding livestock, after a period of ten years not many households who have lived primarily on governmental subsidies during their resettlement period will be able to afford to buy sufficient animals to assure their living, due to the high rates of inflation currently present in China. Another worry of the pastoralists is that after such a period of time, a new generation will grow up in the urban resettlements and settlements, with no experience of pastoralism and therefore unable to lead a life based on animal husbandry back in the grassland. However, considering the possibility of return, the pastoralists participating in resettlement projects understand the relocation situation as being temporary and do not see any need to restructure the pastoralist basis of their lives. They either keep part of their livestock on the grassland to supply them with dairy and other products, or simply plan to bridge the period of living in the resettlement somehow, with help from the government subsidy, their savings or collecting caterpillar fungus in the majority of the examined cases. Most of the resettled households do not make any significant effort to find a new long-term occupation that could secure their income in the future. At this point, there seems to be another misunderstanding between the attitude of the pastoralists and the government. The available official documents make it clear that the government hopes that the pastoralist households will use the relocation period to find a new occupation and shift the centre of their life into the urban areas, and not necessarily return back to their pasturelands later.

7.3.1. New income sources in the new urban villages

There are plans for new occupation opportunities for resettled pastoralists, but these proposals remain mostly on paper and are not converted into reality. In some areas, there is also governmental vocational training that offers, for example, the craft of shoemaker or motorcycle repair for resettled and poor pastoralist households, but these are only short-term training courses usually lasting only one month. The trainees therefore have no self-confidence in exercising these skills after such a short period of time, and do not build their new life base on the profession they have learned. Currently, there is definitely

not enough assistance for the resettled and settled pastoralists to find new occupations or obtain new qualifications²⁸⁶. In Zeku County, there are also places like Heri Township, where the sedentarisation really seems to benefit the local pastoralists. Heri is a place where a handicraft tradition exists, and the pastoralists who master these skills do really profit from relocation into an urban area, where they can more easily market their products. However, in the majority of resettlements and settlements, the pastoralists do not have such a possibility and merely wait for what the future or the government will bring.

7.3.2. Facilities in the new urban villages

In terms of the quality of the new houses and villages constructed by the government, we can also find numerous failures. According to the stated policy, the new houses should possess elements of Tibetan style architecture.



Figure 49: Settlement site in Wangjia Township, Zeku County, November 2011

²⁸⁶ Cai, Hou, Zhang 2005: 37-59.

In Zeku County, where the house construction is supervised by the government, such parts are made of poor-quality material and are only glued to the top of the facade. After only one year, these elements are falling off, exposing plain brick and concrete walls.

The facilities on site such as streets, water and electricity supply are rarely complete. In Zeku County, it is normal to have to carry water from open streams as before, and certain resettlement and settlement sites have wires brought to the new village but not distributed to each house, so that solar panels are still needed to supply electricity for lighting (see figure 49). Many resettlement and settlement sites do not even possess a public toilet nearby, and there is no waste disposal, so that the hygiene conditions around the courtyards are quite poor (see figure 50).



Figure 50: Settlement in Duofudun Township, Zeku County, November 2011

It is obviously not enough to construct a new village: it is also necessary to assure necessary maintenance. This issue, however, is lacking not only in the new villages, but also in the majority of township and county seats in the grassland areas of Qinghai Province.

7.4. Summary and future prospects

The current situation implies that in order to ensure better assimilation of the inhabitants of the high plateau into the rest of mainland China's society and to obtain stricter control over China's western regions, the government is planning to transform the pastoralist way of life into a more settled one, such that the current form of Tibetan pastoralism will no longer exist in the future.

Such a change was also the case amongst other societies, also amongst pastoral societies, for example, in other parts of Central Asia²⁸⁷. A lifestyle change is a natural process based on environment transformation, development possibilities and other extra-regional factors. With the transformation of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau due to Chinese modernisation and global influences²⁸⁸, a change of the life-world of the Tibetan pastoralists is also inevitable. Even now, the current generation of young Tibetans from pastoralist families, having obtained regular school education, dreams about work as music or movie stars or at least as governmental appointees in town, and not about returning to the grassland and herding sheep and yaks. The important issue is that this process of societal change must appear spontaneously, in harmony with the needs and abilities of the concerned group. A hasty and forced lifestyle change, as in the case of most of the resettlement and settlement projects of the Central Government in China, might lead not only to the loss of important cultural aspects of the Tibetan pastoralist society connected to their life on the grassland, as many Tibetan intellectuals fear, but also to severe problems for the Chinese government. Currently, it must deal with a society living under conditions that are perhaps 'backward', yet nevertheless, this society, due to its land and livestock, remains primarily economically self-sufficient. Overly

²⁸⁷ Also among current research reports, we can find examples of pastoral societies shifting the base of their livelihoods away from animal husbandry, in order to adapt to socioeconomic and environmental or political changes, population growth, globalisation or other extra-regional factors. See for example: Nüsser, Holdschlag, Rahman 2012: 31 – 52, Ahmed 2009: 145-151 or Dollfus 2004: 200-213 etc.

²⁸⁸ Mackerras 2003: 57 - 61.

rapid sedentarisation of Tibetan pastoralists, in order to meet all the requirements of scheduled development projects, together with the removal of the income base of these households without replacing it with a new one, might turn the Tibetan pastoralists into a group forced to the margins of society, financially dependant on the Chinese government. In turn, this situation could again stimulate new tensions within Tibetan society and be counterproductive to the efforts of the Chinese government to gain improved political stability. Furthermore, the rapid change of the lifestyle of the pastoralist society might also have a negative impact on the environment. The lack of mobility caused by enclosing the living space of people and livestock through grassland management and sedentarisation only adds to the recent severe degradation of grassland²⁸⁹.

The question is not if the modernisation and development of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, or the sedentarisation of Tibetan pastoralists, is good or bad, as there certainly exist valid arguments from the side of the pastoralists and from the government that speak both for and against the process. However, it is particularly important to consider how to initiate and realize these changes in order to bring the greatest benefit to the affected participants. This aspect is the weak point of the particular projects mentioned in this dissertation. In the cases of examined sedentarisation efforts in pastoralist areas of Amdo, the pastoralists should definitely be more involved with the process of planning and implementation, and should obtain more detailed information about the background of the implemented policy that concerns them and their pastureland.

Lack of qualifications for success in a new profession on the part of the pastoralists, and lack of assistance to adapt to the new environment from the part of the government forms one important reason for scepticism regarding current sedentarisation efforts. Moreover, the feeling of pastoralist identity makes it difficult for the households to adapt to life in the new urban locations and find a new occupation quickly. Being a pastoralist is not only an occupation, it is a way of life that defines the course of the daily activities and the thought processes of the people. It will therefore take a long time and

²⁸⁹ See also: Humprey, Sneath 1999: 1.

require exceptional patience and support on the part of the government, until these people can adapt their identity and find for themselves a new place in the urban society.

The extraordinary significance of the *Great Opening of the West* development strategy for the Tibetan pastoralists is that it shifts their complete living and livelihood base into the new environment of an urban area. The implementation of the resettlement and settlement projects in the Amdo area and with it the sedentarisation process of Tibetan pastoralists in China has, however, only recently reached its peak and is still continuing. Some households have moved just a few years ago and other households, especially those involved in the *Nomadic Settlement Project*, are about to start their life in a new village now.

However, even if it is not possible to offer any general conclusions about the final impact of this policy on the life of Tibetan pastoralists, the textual information given in governmental documents and the experiences and the reactions of the people concerned that were collected and analysed within the research period all document this important stage in the history of Tibetan pastoralism. The present moment might be the key period regarding a future transformation of the Tibetan pastoral way of life into a more sedentary one, one that will influence not only the pastoralists themselves, but also the future development of the whole of Tibetan society.

Appendix 1

Migration and Population Dynamics in Zeku County²⁹⁰

According to Chinese statistics, a strong population increase was evident in Zeku from the beginning of the 1960s, which might be explained as a result of the dispatch of Han soldiers and cadres into the whole of Western China²⁹¹. In the following years, the population growth still shows a slight increase, until 1981, when a strong outbound migration is evident.

Year	Moved-in	Moved-out	Change
1959	1020	-	-
1960	2081	-	2081
1961	350	300	50 ²⁹²
1962	250	400	-150
1963	131	161	-30
1964	230	238	-8
1965	319	282	37
1966	2284	1664	620
1967	407	197	210
1968	530	158	372
1969	206	433	-127
1970	262	122	140
1971	451	362	89
1972	523	131	392
1973	189	200	-11
1974	377	186	291
1975	329	210	119
1976	360	125	245
1977	909	422	487
1978	459	509	-62
1979	721	608	113
1980	703	444	259
1981	428	1149	-721
1982	385	390	-5
1983	377	433	-56
1984	690	655	35
1985	754	522	232
1986	514	583	-69
1987	1078	1067	11

²⁹⁰ Li 2005: 479.

²⁹¹ See: Joniak-Lüthi 2013.

²⁹² In the book, is the number -2750, which is wrong according to the table. In case the move-in/move-out data is correct, then the change quote would be 50. The year 1961 is mentioned two times in the table, but the second time the numbers are the same as in 1962, so probably it is a tipping mistake. (Li 2005: 479).

1988	489	415	74
1989	347	375	-28
1990	376	580	-204
1991	151	369	-218
1992	99	202	103
1993	132	270	-138
1994	186	162	24
1995	206	272	-66

Appendix 2

Livestock statistics in Zeku County from 1954 to 1995²⁹³

Year	Amount of livestock at the end of the year	Annual growth- rate(%)	Yak	Horse	Sheep	Goat
1954	523587		87612	9637	419358	6980
1955	573496	9,53	99579	10281	455360	8276
1956	644924	12,45	110721	11641	512466	10096
1957	609263	-5,53	113483	11058	474596	10126
1958	716946	17,67	130497	11633	557987	16829
1959	534504	-25,45	87727	6505	430408	9864
1960	482186	-9,79	67771	6016	399271	9128
1961	502468	4,21	86091	5968	400153	10256
1962	523667	4,22	95216	5597	419854	3000
1963	597063	14,02	110866	6345	473554	6298
1964	673836	12,86	126438	7493	530912	8953
1965	704397	4,54	137798	8276	549032	9191
1966	770946	9,45	141409	9711	609215	10403
1967	801750	4,00	150262	10525	630825	9913
1968	822294	2,56	159521	12082	641086	9605
1969	767516	5,50	165578	13391	678333	10214
1970	718485	-17,18	159970	12808	536553	9154
1971	823862	14,67	172800	13936	626116	11010
1972	869208	5,50	171050	13368	673013	11777
1973	1002322	15,31	195119	15192	778028	13713
1974	1017482	1,51	193968	15324	794141	14049
1975	884039	-13,12	167965	14402	687489	14183
1976	1000226	13,14	187075	15156	783022	14713
1977	1070900	7,07	200486	14612	844024	11503
1978	1100917	2,80	206519	15280	870355	8699
1979	972947	-11,62	197578	14504	753102	7621

²⁹³ Li 2005: 133-134.

1980	962278	-1,10	204961	13638	735485	8118
1981	957438	-0,50	230436	14446	704240	8264
1982	1042081	8,84	273814	16418	742685	9108
1983	937143	-10,07	284064	16275	628554	8250
1984	837452	-6,37	281906	16504	571206	7836
1985	878566	0,13	285257	16296	570495	6545
1986	827978	-5,76	276255	15416	529824	6484
1987	767144	-7,35	278205	13666	467606	7667
1988	771074	0,51	276732	13150	474243	6949
1989	763361	-1,00	267980	12604	475734	7043
1990	775191	1,55	270457	12274	485145	7315
1991	833100	7,47	313800	12400	495700	11200
1992	848787	1,88	302042	11315	524756	10674
1993	790515	-6,87	265419	10234	505534	9328
1994	793534	0,38	266057	9147	508896	9434
1995	815767	2,80	277902	4806	520081	9378

Appendix 3

Vocabulary of Chinese and Tibetan Terminology

<div><div></div><div>English terms</div></div>	Chinese terms	Traditional Tibetan terms	Tibetan terms preferred by local population	Official Tibetan terms
Qinghai Province	青海省	མདོ་ཁྲང་།	མཚོ་ཕྱོན་ཞིང་ཆེན།	
Amdo area	安多地区	ཨ་མདོ་ས་ཁུལ།		
Zeku County	泽库县	ཅེ་ཁོག་རྫོང་།		
Great Opening the West development strategy	西部大开发		རྒྱལ་རྒྱུད་གསར་སྐྱེལ་ཆེན་མོ།	
Three Rivers’ Headwaters National Nature Preservation Zone	三江源国家级自然保护区	གཙང་གསུམ་འབྲུང་ཡུལ་གྱི་རྒྱལ་ཁབ་རིམ་པའི་རང་བྱུང་སྤྱོད་ས་ཁུལ།		
Henan County	河南县	སྐག་པོ་རྫོང་།	ཉི་ནན་རྫོང་།	
Maixiu forest	麦秀林场	དམེ་ཤུལ་ནགས་ཆལ།		
Duofudun	多福顿	སྟོབས་ལྷན།		
Huangnan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture	黄南藏族自治州		མ་ཕྱོ་བོད་རིགས་རང་སྐྱོང་ཁུལ།	
Tuyuhun tribe	吐谷浑			
Qiang tribe	羌	ཆང་།		
Dahua County	达化县			
Gansu Province	甘肃省		ཀན་སུའུ་ཞིང་ཆེན།	
Zequ River	泽曲	ཅེ་ཅུ།		
Rebgong	隆务	རེབ་གོང་།	རོང་བོ།	ཐུན་རིན།
Heri (tribe)	和日	ཉོར།		
Longwu (tribe)	隆务	རོང་བོ།		
Wangjia (tribe)	王家	བོན་རྒྱ།		
Suonaihai (tribe)	琐乃亥	སོ་ནག།		
Guashenze (tribe)	瓜什则	མགར་ཅེ།		
Maixiu (tribe)	麦秀	དམེ་ཤུལ།		
Guanxiu (tribe)	官秀	མགོན་ཤུལ།		

Xibusha (tribe)	西卜沙	དཔེ་ས།		
Gudegarang (tribe)	古德尕让	གོ་ཁུ་ཐེ་ཀ་རོང་།		
Keriqina (tribe)	克日其那	ཁེ་རུ་འི་ཁུ་ང།		
Heri district area; administrative seat Zhoumaoduozetan g	和日区; 周毛多则塘	ཉོར་ས་ཁུལ། ; འབྲུག་མོ་དོ་རྩེགས་ཐང་།		
Duofudun district area; administrative seat Duofudun	多福顿区; 多福顿	སྟོབས་ལུན་ས་ཁུལ། ; སྟོབས་ལུན།		
Guanxiu district area; administrative seat Duohemao	官秀区; 多禾茂	མགོན་ཤུལ་ས་ཁུལ། ; རོ་དཀར་མོ།		
Sairi district area; administrative seat Jiakuatang	赛日地区; 加夸塘	གསེར་ཐེ་འི་ཁུ། ; སྐུ་ཀ་ཐང་།		
Suonaihai district area; administrative seat Suonaihai	琐乃亥区; 琐乃亥	སོ་ནག་ས་ཁུལ། ; སོ་ནག		
Guashenze Township; administrative seat Guashenze	瓜什则乡; 瓜什则	མགར་རྩེ་ཁང་། ; མགར་རྩེ།		
Xibusha Township	西卜沙乡	དཔེ་ས་ཁང་།		
Duofudun Township	多福顿乡	སྟོབས་ལུན་ཁང་།		
Duohemao Township	多禾茂乡	རོ་དཀར་མོ་ཁང་།		
Heri Township	和日乡	ཉོར་ཁང་།		
Xiade Township	夏德日乡	ཁྱ་དར་ཁང་།		
Qiake Township	恰科日乡	ཆ་གོར་ཁང་།		
Ningxiu Township	宁秀乡	ཉིན་ཤུལ་ཁང་།		
Wangjia Township	王家乡	བོན་རྒྱ་ཁང་།		
Zequ region	泽曲地区	རྩེ་གཞུང་ས་ཁུལ།		
Set of Four	四配套	འཕེལ་རྒྱས་བཞི།		
pika		ཨ་བ་བྲ།		
One Child Policy	计划生育			འཆར་ལུན་ བྱ་སྒྲེས།
Household Responsibility System	家庭联产承 包责任制			རྒྱ་སའི་འག ན་གཙང་ལེ ན།

Guoluo Prefecture	果洛州	མགོ་ལོག་ཁུལ།		
Yellow River	黄河	མ་ཆུ།		
Yangtze River	长江	འབྲི་ཆུ།		
Mekong River	澜沧江	ཇོ་ཆུ།		
Water Tower of China	中华水塔		གྲང་ཏུ་ཆུ་མཛོད།	
Yushu	玉树	ཡུལ་ཤུལ།	ཡུལ་རྒྱལ།	
Haixi	海西	མཚོ་ནུབ།		
Hainan	海南	མཚོ་སྒོ།		
Guanxiu forest region	官秀林区	མགོན་ཤུལ་ནགས་ཁུལ།		
Ecological Protection and Construction Project	生态保护与建设项目	སྤྱི་ཁམས་སྲུང་སྐྱོང་དང་འཛུགས་སྐྱབ་བཅོས་སྐྱབ།		
Farmers' and Nomads' Production and Living Basic Facilities Construction Project	农牧民生产生活基础设施建设项目	རོང་འབྲོག་མང་ཚོགས་ཀྱི་ཐོན་སྐྱེད་འཚོ་བའི་མང་གཞི་སྤྱི་ག་ཆས་འཛུགས་སྐྱབ།		
Sustainability Project	支撑项目	སྤྱི་ཁམས་སྲུང་སྐྱོང་རོགས་སྐྱོར་འཛུགས་སྐྱབ།		
Turning Pastureland into Grassland	退牧还草	མོ་བསྐྱར་རྩ་འདེབས།		
Turning Farmland into Forest or into Grassland	退耕还林还草	མོ་བསྐྱར་ནགས་སྐྱོང་དང་རྩ་འདེབས།		
Putting in Order Degraded Land	生态恶化土地治理	སྤྱི་ཁམས་ཞན་འགྱུར་རྩ་ས་བཅོས་སྐྱོང་།		
Fire Protection of Forests and Grassland	森林草原防火	ནགས་ཚལ་དང་རྩ་སའི་མེ་སྐྱོན་ཐོན་འགོག		

Prevention of Harm Caused by Mice	鼠害防治	ཇམ་བུའི་གཞི་དཔ་ཕྱོད་འགོག
Water and Land Preservation	水土保持	ས་ཆུ་སྤྱང་འཛིན།
Construction of Nature Reserve Area Management Facilities and Capacities	保护区管理设施与能力建设	སྤྱང་སྦྱོབ་ཁུལ་གྱི་སྒྲིག་ཆས་དོ་དམ་འཛུགས་སྐྱུན།
Ecological Resettlement	生态移民	སྤྱི་ཁམས་གནས་སྤོར།
Small Town constructions	小城镇建设	མཐར་གྲོང་ཆུང་བ་འཛུགས་སྐྱུན།
Grassland Protection Set	草地保护配套	རྩ་སའི་སྤྱང་སྦྱོབ་ཞོགས་འདེགས།
Drinking Water for People and Livestock	人畜饮水	མི་ཕུགས་ཀྱི་འཕུང་ཆུ།
Man-Made Rain	人工增雨	མིས་ཐབས་ཀྱིས་ཆར་འབབ་པ།
Scientific Sustainability and Environment Monitoring	科技支撑与生态监测	ཚན་རྩལ་གྱི་གཞིགས་འདེགས་དང་སྤྱི་ཁམས་ལྟ་ཞིབ་ཚད་ལེན།
Project to Increase Living Comfort	温饱工程	
Nomadic Settlement	游牧民定居	གནས་སྤོ་འབྲོག་མིའི་གཏན་སྤོང།
Closing Mountains for Afforestation	封山绿化	རི་བཀག་ལྗང་བསྐྱུར།
Maqin County	玛沁县	མ་ཆེན་རྫོང་།
Bush forests	灌木林	སྒྲིབ་མ།
Dari County	达日县	དར་ལག་རྫོང་།

Grazing Ban Resettlement	搬迁禁牧	ཕུགས་བཀག་གནས་ཕྱོགས་སུ།	
Xinghai County	兴海县	གཤམ་དཀར་སྤེལ་རྫོང་།	ཞིན་ཏེ།
Tongde County	同德县	འབའ་རྫོང་།	ཐུན་ཏེ།
Gonghe County	共和县	གསེར་ཆེན་རྫོང་།	ཆབ་ཆ། གུང་ཏོ།
Guinan County	贵南县	མང་ར་རྫོང་།	གོས་ནན།
Sanjiangyuan office	三江源办公室	གཙང་གསུམ་འབྲུང་ཡུལ་གཞུང་སྐབ་ཁང་།	
Laka site in Tongren county	同仁拉卡	གཉེན་ཐོག་ལ་ཁ།	ཐུན་རིན་ལ་ཁ།
The CP school in Tongren town	同仁党校	ཐུན་རིན་ཏང་ཞོལ།	
Zeku County town	泽库县城	ཅི་ཁོག་རྫོང་།	
Longzang village	龙藏	ལུང་བཟང་།	
Dulong village	多龙	དོ་ལུང་།	
Duofudun Township administrative centre	多福吨乡政府	སྟོབས་ལུན་ཁང་སྲིད་གཞུང་།	
Duohemao Township administrative centre	多和茂乡政府	དོ་དཀར་མོ་ཁང་སྲིད་གཞུང་།	
Ningxiu Township administrative centre	宁秀乡政府	ཉིན་ཤུལ་ཁང་སྲིད་གཞུང་།	
Heri Township administrative centre	和日乡政府	ཧོར་ཁང་སྲིད་གཞུང་།	
Zhigeri village	智格日	འབྲུ་དཀར།	
Resettlement community programme	移民社区配套设施	གནས་སྤོ་ཡུལ་མི་འདུས་སྡོད་ས་ཁུལ་གྱི་སྤྱི་བའི་སྤྱིག་ཆས	

Maduo County	玛多	མ་ལྷོད།	
Caterpillar fungus	冬虫下草	དབྱར་ཚུ་དགུན་འབྲ།	
Enclosing Hillsides to Raise Trees	封山育林	རི་བཀག་ནགས་གསོ།	
Constructing livestock raising facilities	建设养畜	ཕྱགས་གསོ་འཛུགས་སྐྱུན།	
Tongren	同仁	རེབ་གོང་།	ཐུན་རིན།

List of abbreviations:

AD: Administrative documents

CP: Communist Party

PRC: People's Republic of China

Sanjiangyuan: Three Rivers' Headwaters Nature Reserve

SNNR: Three Rivers' Headwaters National Nature Reserve

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